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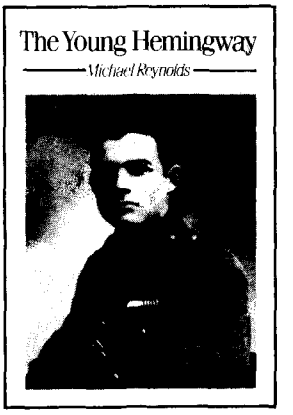

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The Hudson Review

A magazine of literature and the arts

VOLUME XXXIX NUMBER 1 SPRING 1986

ESSAYS

William James as Culture Hero — MONROE K. SPEARS — 15
I Think, Therefore I Dream — BERT O. STATES — 53

FICTION

Lady of Spain — ROBERT TAYLOR, JR. — 33

POETRY

Publishing Days; His Funny Valentine — LOUIS SIMPSON — 81
The Return; In the Borghese Gardens; Fountain — CHARLES TOMLINSON — 87
Father; Ann; Days — JAYANTA MAHAPATRA — 94
Adirondack Town: An Idyll; The Postmaster; Crows and Windmills — DICK ALLEN — 97
What's New in Appalachia; Wyoming Stop-off; Florida, 1984 — JANE MAYHALL — 101
The Larval War — RICHARD GROSSMAN — 103
Elmstead Woods Station — HILARY DAVIES — 105
Boat Made of Water — KRISTOPHER JOHNSON — 106

CHRONICLES

Dance — MARCIA B. SIEGEL — 107
Pina Bausch
Theatre
"A Lie of the Mind" and others — JILL DOLAN — 113
"The Iceman Cometh" — ROBERT LEITER — 117
Fiction — GEORGE KEARNS — 121
Doris Lessing, Carlos Fuentes, Gilbert Sorrentino and others
Poetry — JAMES FINN COTTER — 153
Mark Jarman, Galway Kinnell, Pablo Neruda and others

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REVIEWS

Fire Burning in the Rain — DICK ALLEN — 135
Ursula K. Le Guin's "Always Coming Home"

Better Late than Never — MARVIN MUDRICK — 141
"La Regenta" by Leopoldo Alas

Phenomenal Illusion — HARRY GOLDGAR — 149
"Great Reckonings in Little Rooms" by Bert O. States

Father by Daughter: The Life of E. F. Schumacher — DAVID EHRENFELD — 166
Schumacher's life and thought

LETTER FROM LONDON — DERWENT MAY — 6

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS — 173

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Letter from London

DEAR H,

An American book that many people have been reading in England this winter is Maynard Mack's life of Alexander Pope. There have been some criticisms of it—Mack sometimes cracks weak jokes as though trying to win the sympathy of suspicious students, for instance when he quotes Pope's use of the word "dame," and titters gently at the comic effect it might have on a twentieth-century ear. But, such blemishes apart, his book gives a wonderful, dramatic picture of this brilliant Roman Catholic satirist making his career in a Protestant England that was often very hostile to him. Pope was embroiled, as friend or enemy, with most of the public figures of his day, and Mack portrays those too, deftly but at the same time with rich and vivid detail. (The book is published, incidentally, by Yale University Press, which has achieved a considerable presence in London, publishing many books by British writers and scholars such as Mark Girouard, the architectural historian, as well as importing Yale's American books.)

What Mack particularly reminds one of is the way in which most of the great writers of Pope's era were caught up in its political arguments and battles. The struggle was on between the old landowning Tories and the new Whig nabobs who had made their money in trade, and no doubt it was often a mean enough battle. But there were distinguished men on either side, and issues of principle were also involved. The Tories claimed to stand for the traditional pieties and decencies, and saw the preoccupation with money and trade as crass and cruel. The Whigs believed that they stood for the liberty of the British people, for the prosperity of the nation and the rule of reason and commonsense. Writers like Pope and Swift inclined strongly to the Tory side, though they were not narrow partisans and had friends in both parties. However, they tackled the great political issues in their writing, and did not spare—often at great danger—to name those individuals they regarded as villains.

You would not get anything like such a clear picture of the prevailing political disagreements from British novelists and poets writing recently. Yet the political battlelines as drawn up in the 1980s have an uncanny similarity to those of Pope's time. Mrs. Thatcher's Tories are the intellectual descendants of those eighteenth-century Whigs, determined to put the country on a sound commercial basis and believing that, to achieve such an end, they must break the vested interests and shatter the sluggish conventions of British life, giving business and finance the fullest possible freedom. The opposition are a mixed bunch: some old-fashioned, dissident Tories, who believe in kindly hierarchical rule; the new Social Democratic Party

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(now in alliance with the Liberals), who are mainly very moderate socialists who left the Labour Party when it seemed to be coming under the dominance of the hard Left; and the right wing of the Labour Party. All these go on believing in the old "consensus" that prevailed in Britain for twenty-five to thirty years after the war. That was a belief in a mixed economy, part free-enterprise and part nationalised; attentiveness to the claims of the trade unions; a welfare-minded government; and a moderate degree of inequality and class distinction. For thirty years, both the Labour Party and the Conservatives shared such beliefs, only tilting the emphasis now this way, now that.

Mrs. Thatcher was swept into power when, in the 1970s, it became clear that the "consensus" beliefs were beginning to produce the worst of all worlds: business was hampered, prosperity was dwindling, and welfare was becoming too costly to sustain in such circumstances. The formula had worked in the shattered postwar world; but the world had got on its feet again since then, and Britain had not adapted. Mrs. Thatcher seemed to promise that she would take that adjustment to reality in hand.

Now, though, I think there is a certain political despondency in the country. Mrs. Thatcher's government has certainly made some changes: cutting back on public spending and reducing inflation, selling off nationalised industries, breaking the power of some of the most left–wing trades union leaders, like Mr. Scargill, the miners' leader. Everyone would agree in calling her a radical. Yet the economy cannot exactly be said to have flourished, when there are still millions of unemployed, all drawing welfare benefit out of the taxes of those who make money or have a job. This is not full use of the nation's resources: in fact, the level of welfare provision, however inadequate, shows that the government still shares some of the consensus beliefs—more than might have seemed to be the case in its early years.

Many people hate the Tories, and would vote Labour for that reason. But it is hard to find many people with a burning conviction that Labour has the policies that would put the British economy right. So if Mrs. Thatcher's policies are not working well, either, where is the electorate to look? The hard Left has pockets of power locally, and makes a lot of noise—but the nation in general is not impressed. My own guess is that at the next general election, which will probably be in about two years' time, Mrs. Thatcher will scrape back again. She, at any rate, believes that the tide is now turning for the better for the prosperity of Britain and the nation, I think, will grudgingly follow her a bit further.

However, as I say, there is not much of a reflection of these matters in recent English literature. Two of the novels most praised this winter were Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* and Jonathan Raban's *Foreign Land*. Both seemed, in their different ways, simply to be wash-

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ing their hands of England. Ackroyd's chilling book was about a detective who finds in himself a strange affinity with an eighteenth-century architect who immured young boys in his churches: it is as though, for Ackroyd, some horrific, squalid London long thought dead was lurking under its shallowly civilised veneer. For Raban, the "foreign land" seemed to be Britain itself: an English sailor comes home to it, is deeply depressed, and takes himself off to the sea again, where he can be happy in his lonely battle with the elements. Only Doris Lessing has recently tackled a political issue head-on, in her novel *The Good Terrorist*, where she tries to bring out the moral and emotional muddle behind the clumsy activities of a young terrorist group.

As for the poets, if any of them write about politics it is mainly the politics of ecology and conservation. Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate, wrote a good letter to *The Times* about the overfishing of salmon off the East coast as they make their way back to the Scottish rivers: such fishing now constitutes a serious threat to the breeding population of salmon in Scotland, and consequently to the salmon's future. In the same week, the week of 12 August, when grouse shooting begins ("the glorious 12th"), I published a poem by Hughes in *The Listener* called "Grouse Butts." It is a poem in defence of grouse shooting—because on moors preserved for grouse, both hunters and grouse live on as they have always done. The alternative is the extermination of the wild grouse, with the species only surviving—"millions crying in a shed"—by being bred for food like chickens. Better than that is

> a freedom defended
> By the Keeper's numbered guns,

and grouse who can bequeath to their offspring

> Grouse-life and grouse-laughter
> And eyes that watch the dawn
> Rise on the place they were born.

As it happens, one of the few poems written by Philip Larkin in the last twenty years of his life was a melancholy prophecy about the destruction of the English countryside, called "Going, Going"

> And that will be England gone,
> The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
> The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
> There'll be books; it will linger on
> In galleries; but all that remains
> For us will be concrete and tyres. . . .

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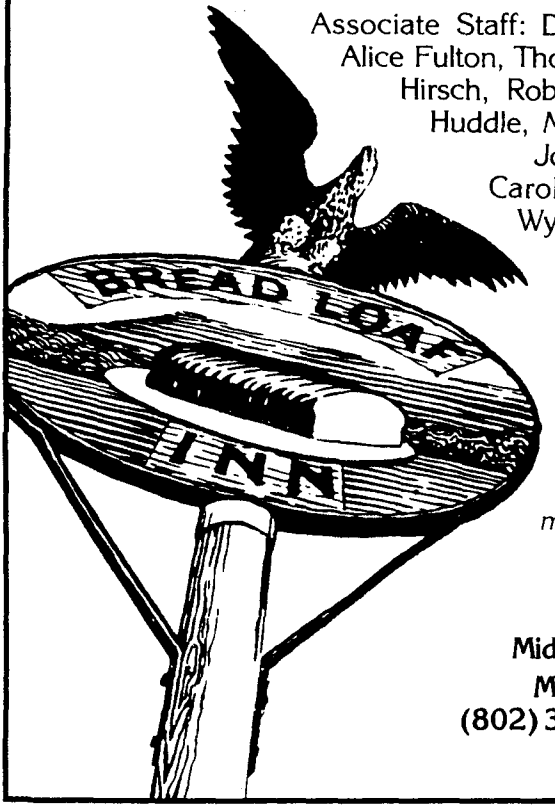

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But Larkin himself is dead, at only 63; and Britain has been grieving for him. He was one of three poets who died within ten days at the end of 1985, of three different poetic generations. He was the youngest of them, a postwar poet, and I don't think anyone can doubt that he was the best of that group. He wrote many poems explicitly about death; but in the days after his own, many of the others seemed more death-haunted than when one had first read them. Yet that note only set off the more movingly the feeling of fragile or evanescent beauty or happiness in the poems: in "How Distant," the evocation of the young men going to sea, where

> Melodeons play
> On tiny decks past fraying cliffs of water
> Or late at night
> Sweet under the differently-swung stars;

the mood of the June countryside in "Cut Grass," with

> that high-builded cloud
> Moving at summer's pace;

and even the characterisation of home (in the poem of that name) as "a joyous shot at what things ought to be."

From an older generation—those poets who first became known in the thirties—was Geoffrey Grigson, whose best poems were like sharp and vibrant etchings, and who was an embattled and often very amusing enemy of sentimentality and rhetoric, whether in poetry or painting. He was 80 when he died.

The oldest was Robert Graves, who died in Majorca at the age of 90 and was already publishing poems in the First World War. He seems to have been slow to be fully appreciated, however: I've got a 1946 edition of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (still being reprinted as late as 1958) in which he does not appear—but his father, Alfred Percival Graves, does, on the strength of some Irish ballads he wrote! An especially odd feature of that entry in the *Oxford Companion* is that it also mentions the father's autobiographical book, *To Return to All That* (1930), a book specifically written as an angry reply to Robert's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), which was partly about his unhappy childhood. (The father's book is, incidentally, a very enjoyable account of life in Ireland at the beginning of this century as a school inspector.)

Graves's early romantic poems, laced with a splendid dry and scholarly wit, have always meant a lot to me: the volume I consider particularly precious is his *Collected Poems 1959*. He went on writing a great deal of love poetry after that, much of which seemed very extravagant, even megalomaniac, and which was largely ignored by the critics. No one, I think, has yet properly sifted it—but I suspect

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that more and more fine things will be found among it as it begins to be read again carefully. Even the megalomaniac note has a certain splendour, as in these opening lines of a poem in the volume *Love Respelt*, published when Graves was 70:

> Those who came short of love for me or you
> Where are they now? Ill-starred and bitter-mouthed.

Let me come back to one more book that has caused a bit of a stir—a thoughtful book called *Unholy Pleasure: The Idea of Social Class*, by P. N. Furbank, the biographer of E. M. Forster. Furbank argues that when we put a class-label on people—"she's a middle-class hypocrite, he's an upper-class twit"—we think we are assigning them to genuinely existing categories; but in fact we are doing nothing of the sort. What we are doing is establishing our *own* position—a superior one, as we hope the world will see—in relation to theirs. But if in an objective way you try to assign people to a class, you find that no one ever fits, that no one ever has all the supposed criteria for belonging to that class. We are all bundles of characteristics, some of which belong to one hypothetical class, some to another, some to a third. Furbank has great sport showing how various sociologists have twisted and turned and wriggled in trying to hang on to their idea of a class structure, when they can't find any people who completely fit into it.

It sounds, perhaps, a rather specialist thesis—but it evoked a great roar of indignation among the reviewers. The interesting thing was that the roar came from both Left and Right—because Furbank was taking the bread out of the mouths of them both. Those new-right columnists like Auberon Waugh, who revel in re-asserting the forgotten merits of the upper classes, would be deprived of their "unholy pleasure" if Furbank were right. But it would be even worse for the left-wing sociologists like E. P. Thompson: if class distinction and class warfare were a myth, they would have to say, like Othello, that their "occupation's gone."

However, Furbank would have to concede that, self-gratifying illusion though "class" might be, the row showed that the subject is still of absorbing interest to the English. Come again soon—and cast a fresh American eye on this matter!

Yours, till then
DERWENT MAY

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MONROE K. SPEARS

William James as Culture Hero

To call William James a culture hero in anything like the anthropological sense is obviously preposterous: the great American public is aware of him, if at all, only as the author of a few trickle-down phrases such as "the stream of consciousness," "the bitch-goddess Success," "the moral equivalent of war." To say, on the other hand, that he is the hero of cultured Americans would have snobbish overtones which James would have detested. At any rate, it seems to be true that the hearts of most Americans who know his work (except "scientific" psychologists) do leap up at the very thought of his name. Because we consider him to be the greatest thinker this country has produced? No, rather because his character is so much what we feel ours might be at our best, and his character is so fully embodied in the nature of his thought and the style of his writing.

As Elizabeth Hardwick puts it (in her introduction to his *Selected Letters*), James was "truly a hero: courteous, reasonable, liberal, witty, expressive, a first-rate writer, a profoundly original expression of the American spirit as a thinker, inconceivable in any other country, and yet at home in other countries and cultures as few of us have been." He hated officialdom and refused to play the role of gentleman or professor; his sister Alice noted that some people "reprobate his mental pirouettes and squirm at his daring to go lightly among the solemnities." Santayana complained that he was "so extremely natural that there was no knowing what his nature was, or what to expect next"; in Cambridge he was "a sort of Irishman among the Brahmins, and seemed hardly imposing enough for a great man." What other philosopher would call a major work *Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, and try to give credit for even the name to two other philosophers, both of whom disclaimed it? In time of war he advised his students, "Don't yelp with the pack," and

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at the other pole of style and reference, he wrote: "The prince of darkness may be a gentleman, as we are told he is, but whatever the God of earth and heaven is, he can surely be no gentleman."

Two recent books, both excellent in their very different ways, attest to the continuing interest in and admiration for James.[1] Howard M. Feinstein's *Becoming William James*[2] is a psychoanalytical study of James's early years, his neurasthenia, depression, psychosomatic illnesses of various sorts, and other difficulties in deciding on a vocation. The psychoanalytic interpretations of James's drawings are particularly fascinating. Unlike many "psychobiographical" studies, however, it is solidly grounded in historical and biographical research and admirably non-doctrinaire. Of special interest is the emphasis on William James of Albany (William James's grandfather), the hard-fisted industrialist who made the family's money, and the whole interplay of relations within the family concerning work and vocation. Henry Sr.'s Swedenborgianism and indulgence of his sons was a reaction against his father's strict Calvinism, belief in hard work and severity to him. The prodigal son syndrome and psychosomatic illness (justifying leisure and residence in Europe) play a very prominent part through three generations.

William James does not appear as hero here, but as late-bloomer who suffered through neurasthenia, depression, and psychosomatic back ailments for many years and went through three apparent failures—as artist, scientist, and physician—before finding his identity and vocation at last. He "finally decided to work, not like his father, in quixotic isolation, or like his brother, as an artist abroad, but as a scientist in America—the task for which nurture and early choice had fitted him." "In his beginnings at Harvard, he pursued physiology as he had pursued medicine—as a natural science that

[1] So does the elaborate new edition of his works being published over many years by the Harvard University Press, and the continued republication of his books among the most advanced offerings in phenomenology, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and other fields of current interest: for example, the State University of New York Press has just reprinted Bruce W. Wilshire's very fine selection of James's *Essential Writings*. He is widely perceived as not merely a historical monument or national symbol, but a thinker still alive and relevant.

[2] BECOMING WILLIAM JAMES, by *Howard M. Feinstein*. Cornell University Press. $24.95.

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provided needed discipline. Philosophy, like painting in his youth, was labeled a self-indulgence that threatened mental stability. Psychology was a compromise between the two . . . Having decided to work, he dared to become ambitious." Feinstein's final sentence sums up the way William James resolved the various conflicts that dominated his youth: "For the rest of his life, his task would be to explain psychological science with literary grace, while defending the meaning of religious experience (such as his father's) against the tyranny of scientific materialism."

The other book, Jacques Barzun's *A Stroll with William James*,[3] is a frankly hero-worshipping one, but with all the virtues of a superlatively good academic presentation. Barzun presents his author in the best light, making essentials clear while warning against misinterpretations and distortions, updating and giving contemporary parallels in the course of a running enthusiastic commentary. (Like many good teachers, he rides hobby-horses and pursues *bêtes noires*—especially Freud, Eliot, and Pound, at whom he can rarely resist a shot, cheap or expensive. But these faults do not seriously mar the book, which is continuously informative and stimulating. The occasional irritations merely add to its liveliness.)

Barzun begins, after a biographical chapter, with "The Masterpiece"—the *Principles of Psychology* (1890). In emphasizing this as James's greatest work, on which all the others depend and in which they are all to some degree implicit, Barzun follows the trend of recent interpretation. (By long and common consent, his other masterpiece is *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1902.) As James puts his central thesis, "the knower is not simply a mirror floating . . . and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor and coefficient of the truth . . . . Mental interests, hypotheses, postulates, so far as they are bases for human action—action which to a great extent transforms the world—help to *make* the truth which they declare. In other words, there belongs to mind . . . a spontaneity, a vote. It is in the game, and not a mere looker on. . . ." (We note with pleasure the democratic metaphors.) James sees

[3] A STROLL WITH WILLIAM JAMES, by *Jacques Barzun*. Harper & Row. $19.95.

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experience as a field or process (or, in his persistent metaphor, a river or stream), in which the aesthetic and the moral participate in sensation and perception. The stream of consciousness is one, prior to later distinctions. Similarly, aesthetic and ethical factors are part of the test of truth, of the sentiment of rationality. This radically new approach is the basis both of his profound contributions to philosophy proper and of his continuing relevance to everything from psychology, parapsychology, religion, and ethics to literary criticism. Whitehead ranked him with Aristotle, Plato, and Leibniz, calling him an "adorable genius" characterized by "greatness with simplicity"; Husserl testified to his profound influence in phenomenology; Russell accepted his radical empiricism and said that he would, "on this ground alone, deserve a high place among philosophers." (Russell does not accept pragmatism, of course, or James's "attempt to build a superstructure of belief upon a foundation of scepticism.")

My concern is not, however, primarily with the importance of his work as philosopher, but with the special affection and admiration he evokes from his readers.

As I read Feinstein and Barzun, I began to see, superimposing itself on the portrait of James, the large and unexpected figure of Samuel Johnson. This conjunction seemed at first extremely implausible: the anti-American old Tory and the open-minded American of socialist-pacifist inclinations; the neo-classical man of letters and the romantic scientist; the master of formal, polysyllabic, oracular prose and the apostle of directness, informality and simplicity. James himself, who never mentions Johnson and seems not to have read him, would certainly have been astonished at the suggestion; there can be no question of "influence." But both men were, and are, heroes of their respective cultures; and the parallels between them unfold and expand in the mind the more one thinks about them.

Perhaps the basic similarity is that both writers, in Johnson's words, "rejoice to concur with the common reader," and both assume common ground with him. Like Johnson, James was a great master of the English language, and like Johnson, he wrote for the common reader and had small respect for those who refused to do so (though James was endlessly pa-

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tient with his unfortunate friend C. S. Peirce, who could not get a teaching job because he could not communicate with students). One reason William is so much more attractive as a person than his brother Henry is that Henry is, as aesthete and type of the pure artist—beautifully rendered and affectionately parodied in Auden's "At the Grave of Henry James"—however admirable, also limited, fussy, and somewhat absurd. His interests and his appeal as "master of nuance and scruple" become inevitably narrower and more specialized. William, on the other hand, remains determined to write technical works in psychology, philosophy, and religion that anyone can read.

I have in mind, of course, not the elderly, sometimes pontifical Johnson portrayed by Boswell so much as the Johnson Agonistes presented in B. H. Bronson's memorable essay, W. J. Bate's fine biography, and much other recent interpretation. Bate says of Johnson, in words that apply also to James: "Few moralists have lived as he did—so close to the edge of human experience in so many different ways. We are speaking of 'experience' in the vivid Latin sense as something genuinely won the hard way—*ex periculo,* 'from danger' or 'from peril' . . . Hence the ring of authority in so much that he says. We know that he has gone through it himself at genuine risk or peril . . ." He cites Johnson's honesty, courage, compassion, and humor—and these four characteristics describe James equally well. Johnson anticipates, he says, as no other classical moralist does, the discovery "that the mind—far from being either a serene, objective, rational instrument, or, as the radical materialists thought, a sort of recording machine . . . is something unpredictably alive in its own right."

One striking biographical similarity to Johnson is James's early tendency to depression, despair, nightmarish emotional disturbances, sensations approaching a state of hallucination. The description of "The Sick Soul" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which James originally attributed to a French correspondent but later acknowledged to come from his own experience, is unforgettable. James was haunted by the memory of an epileptic he had seen in an asylum: "*That shape am I,* I felt, potentially. Nothing that I possess can defend me from that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck

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for him." (Feinstein argues plausibly that the influence of Renouvier in James's recovery from this crisis has been exaggerated; James himself said later that the most important factor was "having given up the notion that all mental disorder requires to have a physical basis.") The similarity to Johnson's breakdown at the age of twenty, his despair and continuing fear of insanity and of the black dog, melancholy, and his love and dread of indolence is marked. Elizabeth Hardwick comments on James's curious procrastination, a hanging back and reluctance to commit himself (he was thirty-six when he married, and his father chose his wife; forty-eight when his first important work, the *Principles*, was published). She says well, in words that apply equally to Johnson, "it was probably procrastination, in all its joy and sorrow, that made him such a great writer on the quirks of human nature. He was a sort of poet of 'habit' and 'will' and never able to bring himself under their pure, efficient control."

Both James and Johnson, then, suffered much and had difficult early years; both worked very hard and made themselves by choice, by the conscious exercise of free will. Both were remarkably honest and candid, both gloried in their common humanity, were not without faults and limitations, but were individual and unpredictable. Both had distinctive senses of humor, which contributed much of the flavor to their writings. The biographical parallel is a subject worthy of a Plutarch; but for the present we will have to restrict ourselves largely to the realm of beliefs and ideas.

Sir Joshua Reynolds said that Johnson "cleared my mind of a great deal of rubbish." Johnson himself said to Boswell, "My dear friend, clear your mind of cant." This is one of Johnson's central achievements, and is exactly paralleled by James. Both go back to the beginnings, to the elements and the essentials, starting afresh, taking nothing for granted; avoiding preconceptions, abstractions, illusions, self-deceptions, and the like, they confront total and concrete experience. James is, of course, being a philosopher, more rigorous than Johnson. He is like the pre-Socratic philosophers, as has often been observed, in making this fresh approach prior to all distinctions and conventional categories and wisdoms. In many other ways James is obviously a more profound thinker

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than Johnson, and more flexible, precise, and many-dimensioned as well. On some occasions we may legitimately take satisfaction in seeing the American have the best of it against the Great Cham.

Describing his own position in a letter of 1904, James wrote: "My philosophy is what I call a radical empiricism, a pluralism, a 'tychism,' which represents order as being gradually won and always in the making. It is theistic, but not essentially so. It rejects all doctrines of the Absolute . . . . I fear that you may find my system too bottomless and romantic."

Johnson was, in his way, also a radical empiricist: "Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth." True, Johnson goes on to make a point rather different from James's: he is arguing for the superior merit of collective experience through time (as embodied, presumably, in tradition and institutions), whereas James emphasizes the experience of the individual. Nevertheless, the basic principle is exactly the same: the superior validity of actual experience to any kind of theory or abstraction or doctrine, and the necessity of judging all such theories by the criterion of experience. Johnson was also, in the large sense, a kind of pragmatist: "The only end of writing is to enable the reader better to enjoy life, or better to endure it." "There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible."

Both James and Johnson are convinced that free will is a matter of immediate experience: Johnson says, "All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it." His refutation of Berkeley by kicking a stone and his assertions that we *know* our will is free are cruder than James's analyses of how freedom may consist in its minimum essentials of choosing what to think about, what to focus the attention on, and how the decision to believe in free will or not is itself an example of free choice. But the essential meaning is the same, and for both it is grounded in irrefutable personal experience and is intimately related to the moral life. For James as for Johnson, determinism destroys the foundation of morality and renders moral judgment or action meaningless. Wilshire, in his introduction to *The Essential Writings*, says: "James re-

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gards attention and will as the core of the self. That is, the kind of person I am is a matter of my behavior, and this is a matter of the patterned turnings of my attention; what I do is a matter of what I 'hold before me' as objects of thought." Barzun says of James, in words that apply equally well to Johnson, "James, with his insistence on action as the proper end of thought and a guaranty against sentimentalism, practiced his morality of risk and faith in both private and public life."

As to religion, there are great differences, but a fundamental similarity. James writes in a letter of 1900, "The problem I have set myself is a hard one: first, to defend (against all the prejudices of my 'class') 'experience' against 'philosophy' as being the real backbone of the world's religious life—I mean prayer, guidance, and all that sort of thing immediately and privately felt, as against high and noble general views of our destiny and the world's meaning; and second, to make the hearer or reader believe, what I myself invincibly do believe, that, although all the special manifestations of religion may have been absurd (I mean its creeds and theories), yet the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function. A task well-nigh impossible, I fear, and in which I shall fail; but to attempt it is my religious act." Johnson was in total agreement on the importance of religion, but of course was a deeply committed (though also deeply troubled) Christian and supporter of the Church of England. James has a democratic dislike of hierarchies and intermediaries that is very American: "No American can ever attain to understanding the loyalty of a Briton towards his king, of a German towards his emperor; nor can a Briton or German ever understand the peace of heart of an American in having no king, no Kaiser, no spurious nonsense, between him and the common God of all." As to the Anglican church, he writes from England in a letter of 1908 that he has not until recently "had any sense of what a part the Church plays in the national life. So massive and all-pervasive, so authoritative, and on the whole so decent, in spite of the iniquity and farcicality of the whole thing. Never were incompatibles so happily yoked together. Talk about the genius of Romanism! It's nothing to the genius of Anglicanism, for Catholicism still contains some haggard elements,

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that ally it with the Palestinian desert, whereas Anglicanism remains obese and round and comfortable and decent with this world's decencies, without an *acute* note in its whole life or history, in spite of the shrill Jewish words on which its ears are fed, and the nitro-glycerine of the Gospels and Epistles which has been injected into its veins. Strange feat to have achieved!"

The position both took on ghosts and other "paranormal" phenomena is strikingly similar. Both kept open minds on the subject and, at the risk of ridicule, spent much time investigating specific instances. The story of the Cock Lane ghost is the best known example in Boswell; in that case Johnson was "one of those by whom the imposture was detected." James was a very active member for more than 25 years (and President 1894–96) of the Society for Psychical Research. (See Gardner Murphy [ed.], *William James on Psychical Research*, N. Y., 1960.) Neither was in the least gullible, but neither was willing to rule out any possibility or exclude any part of experience on a priori grounds. They wound up with the same baffled conclusion: that the basic question could not be answered. "Whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death," said Johnson, is "one of the most important questions that can come before the human understanding"; but after 5,000 years it is still undecided. "All argument is against it; but all belief is for it."

There is, however, a basic difference. James's attitude toward religion was essentially the same as toward "psychic phenomena," though tinged with more respect, sympathy, and admiration. (He describes his own point of view in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* as "purely existential.") Johnson was a committed Christian and Anglican, though he held that the differences among Christians were trivial, rather political than religious; was a friend of John Wesley and much attracted to Catholicism; and was willing to hear all that a Confucian or Mohammedan might say.

Barzun says that the "glaring contradiction between morality and religion makes 'scholastic theism' and 'popular Christianity' as unacceptable" to James as to him. "In practice, religion supports morality. . . . But originally and most worthily, the faith exists to forgive and unite, while morality divides

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and punishes." But Barzun is here projecting his own view—which seems to attribute a more-than-Lutheran exaltation of Faith above Works to all Christianity—onto James. James, as we shall see, regularly argues instead that morality alone is inadequate and that religion completes it. Barzun distorts James even more seriously when he argues that James felt (as Barzun does) that Christianity is unacceptable because ungentlemanly. Barzun quotes Shaw admiringly: "ladies and gentlemen cannot as such possibly allow anyone else to expiate their sins by suffering a cruel death." (In sharp contrast, we have already noted James's remark that while the Devil may be a gentleman God certainly is not.) Barzun has limitations and prejudices that seem alien to James.

Neither Johnson nor James thinks morality or gentility self-sufficient or a substitute for religion. No gentleman would pursue James's intellectually and socially disreputable and unrespectable psychic phenomena; but James is wholly without snobbery toward these dingy, dubious and often fraudulent characters; in fact he obviously enjoys their vulgarity: "A plague take all white-livered, anaemic, flaccid, weak-voiced Yankee frauds! Give me a full-blooded red-lipped villain like dear old D. . . . obese, wicked, jolly, intellectual, with no end of go and animal spirits. . . ." (He does complain of the "extreme triviality" of most of the spirit communications, their "curiously vague optimistic philosophy-and-water"; he and Myers joke about the "dear spirits . . . hovering around us in the Summer Land.") James's utter lack of moral, as well as social or intellectual, snobbery is particularly apparent in his "Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher" (1909). Defending mediums and other psychics for their tendency to fraud, he remarks, "Man's character is too sophistically mixed for the alternative of 'honest or dishonest' to be a sharp one. Scientific men themselves will cheat—at public lectures—rather than let experiments obey their well-known tendency towards failure. . . . To compare small men with great, I have myself cheated shamelessly." And he gives an account of how, in the interests of the larger truth, he once faked a demonstration of a turtle's heartbeat. "There is a hazy penumbra in us all where lying and delusion meet, where passion rules beliefs as well as conduct, and where the term 'scoundrel' does not

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clear up everything . . . Our subconscious region seems, as a rule, to be dominated either by a crazy 'will to make-believe,' or by some curious external force impelling us to personation."

That Johnson did not believe in any such contradiction or conflict between religion and morality as Barzun wrongly attributes to James hardly needs demonstration. The essential bond between the two was one of Johnson's main themes, as in his warnings against relying on natural goodness or benevolent impulses and his assertion that "To find a substitution for violated morality. . . was the leading feature in all perversions of religion."

James regularly maintains that morality without religion is unsatisfactory: in an essay of 1891 he argues that "in a merely human world without a God, the appeal to our moral energy falls short of its maximal stimulating power. . . . Our attitude towards concrete evils is entirely different in a world where we believe there are none but finite demanders, from what it is in one where we joyously face tragedy for an infinite demander's sake." In the *Varieties* this becomes a central theme: "But the athletic attitude tends ever to break down, and it inevitably does break down even in the most stalwart when the organism begins to decay, or when morbid fears invade the mind. . . . Well, we are all such helpless failures in the last resort. The sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down. . . . And here religion comes to our rescue and takes our fate into her hands. . . . Fear is not held in abeyance as it is by mere morality, it is positively expunged and washed away." Balancing the claims of morbid-mindedness and healthy-mindedness, James decides that healthy-mindedness does not work and "is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality. . . . The lunatic's visions of horror are all drawn from the material of daily fact. Our civilization is founded on the shambles, and every individual existence goes out in a lonely spasm of helpless agony."

James finds himself in agreement with "mankind's common instinct for reality," which "has always held the world to be essentially a theatre for heroism. In heroism, we feel, life's su-

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preme mystery is hidden. . . . The folly of the cross, so inexplicable by the intellect, has yet its indestructible vital meaning. . . . Naturalistic optimism is mere syllabub and flattery and sponge-cake in comparison." And in a footnote late in the *Varieties* James again concludes that "the outlook upon life of the twice-born . . . is the wider and completer. The 'heroic' or 'solemn' way in which life comes to them is a 'higher synthesis' into which healthy-mindedness and morbidness both enter and combine. Evil is not evaded, but sublated. . . ."

Johnson, too, takes an essentially tragic view of life. His generalizations in *Rasselas* and the poems are famous: human life is "everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed," and the vanity of human wishes allows only celestial wisdom to calm the mind, bestowing by grace the happiness it does not find. Johnson was convinced that variety, "multiplicity of agreeable consciousness," is the basis of happiness, and London therefore the most promising locus of felicity. But he maintained that man is happy in the present only when he is drunk; even driving rapidly in a post-chaise, the post-chaise is on its way to or from somewhere. "There is but one solid basis of happiness; and that is, the reasonable hope of a happy futurity," he wrote to Boswell.

The only parallel between James and Johnson that seems to have been noted before (by W. J. Bate) is the resemblance between the James-Lange theory of emotion and Johnson's religious attitude. The theory holds, in short, that the physical expressions of the emotion come first, the feelings later, and the feelings are created by the action. Morally, then, the important thing is to put on the appropriate or desirable expression, and then we shall feel the proper emotion. Johnson's emphasis on religious action as prior to feeling is similar. "He that hopes to find peace by trusting God, must obey him": "This constant and devout practice is both the effect, and cause, of confidence in God." (Johnson's attitude is, of course, by no means peculiar to him, but widely practiced and recommended especially in Roman Catholic devotional literature: one should not wait for the proper feelings to come, but participate in the services and rituals, act properly, and let the feelings come later.) But James was against Pascal's wager, on the ground that masses and holy water are not

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a live option for non-Catholics, though in "The Will to Believe" he argues for it reformulated in psychological terms: "Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear? . . . If religion be true and the evidence for it be still insufficient, I do not wish . . . to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side." (Hypocrisy, Johnson said, is not only the tribute vice pays to virtue but also possibly improving to the hypocrite.)

Certainly Johnson did not think either actions or outward forms enough; he believed, like all Protestants, that justification ultimately is by faith alone; and detested most of all the complacent optimism and rationalism of deists, freethinkers, and revolutionaries. Like all Protestants, he believes that salvation cannot be earned and comes by grace, not merit. But faith is shown by works as well as feelings, and, like Luther, Johnson agonized over whether or not he had it, as judged by either testimony.

Johnson not only takes religion seriously as an intellectual problem, but it is the center of his emotional life. He fears death, damnation, but even more annihilation; prays and writes prayers, reads devotional works, goes to church, tries to amend his life, and so on. But he feels little comfort until his much-debated "conversion" in the last year of his life, after which he seems to feel assurance. James, on the other hand, was only mildly concerned about these matters as far as feelings go: he realizes their tremendous importance to most people, and he is concerned to prove that religion may be true and to defend the right to believe; but he leaves immortality an open question, as he does the meaning of supernatural phenomena. (Santayana said: "He did not really believe. He merely believed in the right of believing that you might be right if you believed.") In *Varieties*, he says he is unable to accept either popular Christianity or scholastic theism, and supposes his "belief that in communion with the Ideal new force comes into the world . . . subjects me to being classed among the supernaturalists of the piecemeal or crasser type." He accepts the Buddhist doctrine of Karma, speculates on the Unconscious as link with the supernatural, and argues the chance it all may be true is enough to give hope. But in a letter he writes, "I have no living sense of commerce with a

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God. I envy those who have . . . yet there is *something in me* which *makes response* when I hear utterances from that quarter made by others." This is, he says, his "mystical germ." In response to a questionnaire, he says, "I can't possibly pray—I feel foolish and artificial." James says his constitution shuts him out from the "enjoyment of mystical states" almost entirely; we can't imagine Johnson speaking in this tone! These are profound differences in temperament and attitude.

James and Johnson agree in having a keen sense of the limits of human reason; the universe, they feel, is larger and richer than reason can explain. Boswell records Johnson: "There are innumerable questions to which the inquisitive mind can in this state receive no answer: why do you and I exist? Why was this world created? Since it was created, why was it not created sooner?" Johnson tends to think fearfully of the awful mystery of God; James is more hopeful, less personal; he enjoys contemplating variety, strangeness, and mystery. For example, this marvellous passage from the *Varieties*: "Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were young, irrational doorways as they were through which the mystery of fact, the wildness and the pang of life, stole into our hearts and thrilled them. The words have now perhaps become mere polished surfaces for us; but lyric poetry and music are alive and significant only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own, beckoning and inviting, yet ever eluding our pursuit. We are alive or dead to the eternal inner message of the arts according as we have kept or lost this mystical susceptibility."

In the late essay, "Humanism and Truth," James uses the familiar Romantic metaphors of the temple versus the wilderness, the man-made, fixed, and static against the organic, natural, and changing: we humanists, he says, "condemn all noble, clean-cut, fixed, eternal, rational, temple-like systems of philosophy. . . . We turn from them to the great unpent and unstayed wilderness of truth as we feel it to be constituted. . . . The fundamental fact about our experience is that it is a process of change. . . . Why should anywhere the world be absolutely fixed and finished? And if reality genuinely grows, why may it not grow in these very determinations which here and now are made?" Describing the work of the

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great psychic researcher F. W. H. Myers, James contrasts the "classic-academic and the romantic type of imagination. The former has a fondness for clean pure lines and noble simplicity in its constructions. . . . Until quite recently all psychology was written on classic-academic lines. . . . the human mind, as it figured in this literature, was largely an abstraction. A sort of sunlit terrace was exhibited on which it took its exercise. And where the terrace stopped, the mind stopped. But of late years the terrace has been overrun by romantic improvers, and to pass to their work is like going from classic to gothic architecture, where few outlines are pure and where uncouth forms lurk in the shadows." But this dichotomy does not really fit Johnson, who, though a firm believer in cosmic order, was intensely aware of the shadows in which lurk melancholy, madness, and possible ghosts. And he was by temperament fiercely independent, proud, individual, eccentric, and rebellious.

What finally can we make of the parallel between James and Johnson? Does it simply show that national stereotypes are meaningless, or that these two coincide because of consanguinity—Americans and English are cousins, after all—beneath surface differences? The fact that Johnson and James are so similar in so many respects, while they are also genuinely national types, makes it obvious that the national aspect is far less significant than the universal. The common sense that distinguishes both to an uncommon degree, the firm grip on reality that constantly forces theory to the test of fact, the candor, honesty, and directness that characterize both, are not peculiar to any nation. Neither is the defense of the common reader against the pretensions of learning: "Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes, / And pause awhile from Letters, to be wise."

That James is more profound than Johnson, more fully aware of the mystery of fact and the unfathomableness of ontology, the otherness of people and things, has no necessary general significance. But we may hope that it is related to the other American national trait—the reverse counterpart of ambition—of modesty, humility, awareness of limits, respect for other humans and non-humans, and the humor that is often a consequence of this awareness and respect.

James is one of the great company of American originals

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and eccentrics, lovers of the unexpected and unpredictable, from Dickinson, Thoreau, and Melville, Emerson and Whitman to Marianne Moore and Charles Ives, Williams and Pound, John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg and John Ashbery. Examples may also be seen in Stevens ("People are not going / To dream of baboons and periwinkles. / Only, here and there, an old sailor, / Drunk and asleep in his boots, / Catches tigers / In red weather"), or Auden's later poetry and essays ("An electron has as much right to exist as we have"), or Lewis Thomas' *Lives of a Cell.* This is one reason James seems quintessentially American. Yet this quality, of course, is not exclusively American (any more than Johnson's good qualities are exclusively English): one of the best recent expressions of it is Louis MacNeice's poem "Snow": "World is suddener than we fancy it. / World is crazier and more of it than we think, / Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion / A tangerine and spit the pips and feel / The drunkenness of things being various."

"Sight of elephants and tigers at Barnum's menagerie whose existence, so individual and peculiar, yet stands there so intensely and vividly real, as much so as one's own, so that one feels again poignantly the unfathomableness of ontology . . . their foreignness confounds one's pretension to comprehend the world—while their admirableness undermines the stoic or moral frame of mind in which one says the real meaning of life is *my* action. The great world of life, in no relation with my action, is so real!" Wilshire, in *Essential Writings*, quotes as first epigraph this passage written in 1873, and stresses James's sense of the mystery of fact: "Not only that *anything* should be, but that *this* very thing should be, is mysterious!"

In his essay, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," James tries at length to suggest what he means by the uniqueness, individuality, and incommunicability of experience. Beginning with an anecdote revealing how utterly different the same external experience may appear to two different people, he goes on to quote favorite passages (from Whitman and Tolstoy, among others) illustrating this totally non-intellectual, non-discursive kind of awareness. He concludes, "I am sorry for the boy or girl, or man or woman, who has never been touched by the spell of this mysterious sensorial life, with its irrationality, if so you like to call it, but its vigilance

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and its supreme felicity." This awareness "absolutely forbids us to be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our own; and it commands us to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may be to us. Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands. Even prisons and sick-rooms have their special revelations."

This is one of the great American themes. With emphasis on the concreteness, richness, and mystery of the religious attitude versus the abstraction of the scientific, it was the central thesis of Ransom's *The World's Body* and the writings of Allen Tate and others of the Fugitive-Agrarians. It is broadly a part of the whole anti-Platonic tradition, opposing otherworldliness, spiritualized idealism, and abstraction, as this tradition appears in Nietzsche, aspects of Pater and Yeats, and especially D. H. Lawrence. James does not celebrate the pre-Socratics nor spend much time abusing Socrates, but he locates the fault explicitly: "Intellectualism in the vicious sense began when Socrates and Plato taught that what a thing really is is told us by its definition. Ever since Socrates we have been taught that reality consists of essences, not of appearances, and that the essences of things are known whenever we know their definitions." The supernatural as revealed by Myers, grotesque and unpredictable, queer and cactus-like, is more plausible than the "whole classic platonizing Sunday-school conception . . . If anything is *un*likely in a world like this, it is that the next adjacent thing to the mere surface-show of our experience should be the realm of eternal essences, of platonic ideas, of crystal battlements, of absolute significance."

As to immortality, James's attitude is generous, democratic, and American: he is against the exclusiveness of the "old narrow-hearted aristocratic creed" and for a "democratic universe, in which your paltry exclusions play no regulative part. Was your taste consulted in the peopling of this globe? How, then, should it be consulted as to the peopling of the vast City of God? Let us put our hand over our mouth, like Job, and be thankful that in our personal littleness we are here at all . . . . For my own part, then, so far as logic goes, I am willing that every leaf that ever grew in this world's forests and rus-

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tled in the breeze should become immortal. . . . The heart of being can have no exclusions akin to those which our poor little hearts set up. The inner significance of other lives exceeds all our powers of sympathy and insight. If we feel a significance in our own life which would lead us spontaneously to claim its perpetuity, let us be at least tolerant of like claims made by other lives, however numerous, however unideal they may seem to us to be."

If ambition is one side of the American coin (and we remember its etymology: going around [like a politician seeking votes]), the other side is modesty: awareness of limits, respect for others, human and non-human. It has always been a part of the national character at its best, and James is one of the grand examples. James's pervasive humor is one of its finest manifestations, based on a deep awareness of the limits of human powers and of his own limitations in particular. For the practicality of the humorless, James has nothing but contempt: "The common foe of thought is the practical, conventionally thinking man to whom nothing has true seriousness but personal interests, and whose dry earnestness in those is only exceeded by that of the brute, which takes everything for granted and never laughs."

When we Americans read (usually under duress) about such ancestors as Cotton Mather, the fear arises in our breasts that we may be like that: provincially insecure, insatiably ambitious, self-righteous, humorless, ruthlessly determined to be "first," in heaven as on earth. But when we read about William James, we feel that this is the kind of person we hope that we are: modest, unpretentious, a genuine democrat, spiritually as well as politically, always warm and generous to others, candid and honest, and at the same time fearless, absolutely independent, hard-working, and productive. As admired ancestor, regarded with pride and affection, he is a true culture hero.

If the repulsive head of Cotton Mather must be imagined on one side of the American coin, let us hope that James's face—compassionate and humorous as well as profoundly intelligent—embellishes the other; and that we win the toss. Nor need the Atlantic—nor his own antipathy—sunder us from that other culture hero, our spiritual kinsman, Samuel Johnson.

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ROBERT TAYLOR, JR.

Lady of Spain

When the Lady of Spain revealed herself to me, I was fourteen years old, the owner of an Allstate motor-scooter and a large and shining Polina accordion. The accordion lessons had begun several years earlier with a tiny rented instrument and were held in the Sunday school room of the Britton Baptist Church. My teacher, a red-cheeked, dark-haired woman named Lorena Harris, wore little makeup and pinned her soft dark hair atop her head in a circle capped by a delicate net. I thought her the member of a strict religious sect, perhaps a Nazarene. The Nazarenes, my father once told me, had founded the town of Bethany, then a few miles away from Oklahoma City instead of surrounded by it, and to this day Bethany permitted neither the sale of tobacco nor the showing of movies. I also had the notion that the Nazarenes had no musical instruments in their church—that they only sang their hymns, and therefore would surely scorn Miss Harris' beautiful accordion, so lavishly trimmed in chrome and pearl. I entertained the idea that she might keep it a secret from them, lead two lives or more, like the spies on television who, throughout that innocent decade, kept track of communists, and this was a pleasant notion that bore much embellishment. Late at night when I grew bored with the radio broadcasts of the latest humiliation of the Oklahoma City Indians, I saw her take her accordion from its plush velvet case, strap it effortlessly to her chest, and begin to play, somewhere in smokeless, movieless Bethany, secret melodies, intricate versions of "Lady of Spain," "Dark Eyes," "La Golondrina." I always imagined her alone, by herself in a room, a version of myself, doomed to solitude but redeemed by strong feeling.

Closed up in my room with bunk beds, an old desk of my father's, and plastic model airplanes dangling above me from the ceiling, I played my accordion for Lorena Harris and for

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my mother. For Miss Harris I played "Blue Moon," "Sentimental Journey," "Are You Lonesome Tonight"; for my mother, "Whispering Hope," "Nearer My God to Thee," "Sweet Hour of Prayer." The accordion was costly, paid for in large part by money that my mother had managed to put aside from her grocery allowance. It had ten shifts on the treble, so that a single note might be made to sound at one moment rich and deep like an organ and in the next shrill and high like a piccolo. Three shifts lined the bass, and a marvelous black and white zig-zag design decorated the front of the bellows. Its weight alone bespoke a vast and intricate interior, a secret realm of lever and wheel. What made the sound? A system of trembling reeds, Miss Harris told me. In my mind the word *reed* was highly significant. It was Biblical. I remembered that among the reeds of the Nile the baby Moses had been hidden from the Pharaoh.

My father had to travel days at a time from one end of Oklahoma to the other, selling class rings and diplomas and band uniforms to reluctant school districts. I had heard stories of his tribulations. It was all politics, he said. His competitors were expert at politicking a superintendent. They did not permit their products to stand on merit. They sold their souls and robbed him of his rightful customers. I imagined smooth-talking, pallid men, plump in pinstriped suits and black and white wing-tipped oxfords. They drove big somber Buicks and their daughters were cheerleaders, their sons quarterbacks.

Such children I had nothing to do with. Anyway, they did not seek me out. My best friend Steve, who had only recently given up his accordion lessons in order to devote more time to baseball, was a quiet, nice church-going boy like myself. I knew he had betrayed something important when he quit his accordion lessons. His mother, I remember, attended all his lessons and had a small beginners' accordion of her own that she practiced on, using Steve's music. I heard her play on several occasions, late afternoons when, out of a need for companionship, I played catch with Steve. The songs floated forth from her bedroom as if from a phonograph record, distant and dreamy. Even the bright polkas sounded plaintive and sweet. Several years older than my mother, Steve's moth-

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er wore dresses rich with eyelets and lace. Her husband scowled a lot, though he was cheerful enough when spoken to. He was a U. S. Marshal. Once I saw his picture in the *Daily Oklahoman*. He was handcuffed to the notorious murderer of entire families, Billy Cook, and although considerably shorter than the killer he looked like he meant business.

My father was surely cut out for better things than measuring the breadth of the fingers of high school juniors for their class rings, the length of their legs for band uniforms. I knew that given the opportunity he would do nothing at all, or else be an artist. A high school teacher of his had urged him to pursue a career in commercial art, but he had graduated from high school in 1932 and had to take what he could get. Selling, he once told me, was the backbone of the country. But there was no conviction in his voice.

During this time his was a quiet presence in the house. He enjoyed a cigar with his evening paper. Then he went out to the office that he had built a few summers ago adjoining our garage, where he worked evenings and sometimes well into the night on his designs for class rings. I liked going out there and was always pleased when asked to deliver a telephone message from a customer, usually some superintendent or principal cancelling an appointment. After relaying the message, I sat on a small sofa just behind the desk, lingering amidst an amazing clutter of papers—what could they have been—orders, bills, magazines, unfinished designs. I remember liking to find copies of the newsletter put out by the company that he worked for, Star Engraving Company of Houston, Texas, a mimeographed pamphlet really, printed on a dozen or so pastel sheets stapled together, its chief function to report on the volume of business done by the sales force, ranking the top salesmen in various categories (rings, caps and gowns, diplomas, invitations, and the like). Finding my father's name most often near the top of each list, I was proud. Sometimes there were notes written by the sales manager or even the president of the company congratulating selected men, the week's leaders.

My father worked diligently at his broad desk, a cigar gone out in the ashtray, a crooked-neck fluorescent lamp glowing and humming softly above his head. Frequently he used a

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magnifying glass, holding it steady a few inches from the sketch, which might have been a representation of a lion's head or the entrance-way to a high school, an Indian's profile or a crouching tiger, or a coiled rattler. Once he had drawn (not for a ring design, of course) a picture of my mother, a pencil sketch of her head in profile, a good likeness and life-size, her long hair upswept in front and cascading into tiny curls on the side and in the back. It was done, I had been told by her, when she was pregnant with me. She looked stern, even a little angry, but a certain serenity also came through. The picture hung in a white frame above their bed and I thought it a very romantic thing to have drawn and wished that I had such a gift.

What do you think of this, he said, pausing to show me what he worked on. Pretty good, eh. There's nothing in McDowell's line to compete with this.

I believed him an excellent artist, but except for these moments of pride in a new design he spoke disparagingly of his talent. It had been compromised, he said, spoiled before it could properly be developed.

The Allstate motorscooter was the cheapest offered by Sears, its engine only slightly larger than the one on my father's power mower. It had a foot brake and tires the diameter of hubcaps. On it I was nonetheless enabled to crisscross Oklahoma City, circle it, ride out Western Avenue until on either side of me the plains stretched endless, the trees disappeared, and the strong wind in my face smelled of hay and occasionally of cattle or horses. Back in town, I paid visits to girls and took them for rides. They had to ride behind me on the tractor-style seat, their legs straddling my hips, their arms wrapped tightly around my chest. Often I could feel their hair brush against the back of my neck, and I shivered and wished, as we crept up a slight rise, the throttle wide open, for more speed, more power.

That summer I worked as a carhop at the Orange Julius stand on May Avenue, near the Lakewood and Lakeside Shopping Centers. Sometimes carloads of teenaged girls came in. These girls, mightily rouged and perfumed, their dark mascaraed eyes flashing, hinted in no uncertain terms of the

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wonderful pleasures one might have in the back seat of their father's Pontiac or Olds 88. I flirted mercilessly and cultivated a swagger, a nonchalant wink, a rakish grin. They told me I was cute, oh so much cuter than the boys their own age, and I began to fancy that I would always have a taste for older women. It did not surprise me that the girls seldom left a tip. Wasn't the feeling that we had so briefly shared beyond the realm of appetite and commerce?

Steve, who also worked at the Orange Julius stand, said that if he ever had the chance, he would be in that back seat in a jiffy. I feared for his soul, but suspected that he wasn't as likely as I was to be put to the test. My attraction, I believed, was somehow connected to playing the accordion, and Steve had left his accordion playing to his mother.

What would you do, I asked him, if you were in the back seat of one of those cars with girls in them.

We were picking up trash on the lot during a lull in customers, stabbing at paper cups and wadded napkins with our spears, as we called the broomsticks with nails in the end.

I would know, Steve said. I'd know what to do all right.

What.

It all depends.

If they let you kiss them then, what would you do?

It still all depends.

On what.

It was not the ethics of the situation that concerned me. I was after reliable information, and suspected that Steve might have known something that I didn't. I knew precious little, it seemed to me. My two sisters were younger than I was and no help. My curiosity was not just academic. Having kissed a girl before, I was keen on repeating the experience. Was it as pleasant for the girl though? That's what I couldn't imagine. A memory that I cherished was of a party given by my cousin and a few of her girlfriends at which kissing was the object of several games. These girls were a year older than I was, dazzling in their promise, with such smooth red lips and soft warm cheeks, the air surrounding them thick with the scent of a variety of perfumes. A boy was mysteriously chosen and led into a darkened room where one of the girls awaited him, kissed him before he could properly see her, and then he was

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sent back out to the lighted room, to be greeted by giggles and jeers. I wanted to stay in that darkened room. Let them laugh—in there I wouldn't hear a thing.

That night on the lot of the Orange Julius stand, Steve seemed annoyed by my question, but at last said that what you did after a girl let you kiss her depended on whether she let you kiss her on the cheek or on the mouth.

On the mouth, I said.

Then you just keep kissing her until she says quit it.

What if she doesn't say quit.

They always say quit.

A car came in then—my customer. The girl in this car sat very close to her date, and her hand rested on his thigh. I was the one she looked at—there was no mistaking it—and in that look I suddenly seemed to see all I needed to know. I vowed to memorize her eyes, and also the shape of that hand resting securely on her date's thigh. It was a small hand, the fingernails long and red. Her scent, I told myself, was like fresh almonds, her voice like a love song. She said, I could drink a pint. And her date said, Two pints, thick, no straws. When I picked up their tray after they were finished, she winked at me. Her boyfriend, a big guy in a letter jacket, left no tip. He sprayed gravel getting out of the lot and laid down rubber on May Avenue. Wherever he was taking her, he was in a big hurry. Too big a hurry, I concluded. I knew now that I would treat her different. I'd take my time.

This was the summer that my accordion teacher got married. I saw the man briefly one day as I was leaving my lesson. Leaning against the fender of her car, he smoked a cigarette and seemed on the verge of sleep. Tall and lanky, long-necked and tightly jeaned, he had a head shaped like the grill of an Edsel, with hair congealing into dark ribbon-like strands that curved over his head and curled at the upper reaches of his neck. I could not imagine him with a regular job, or even with one such as my father had. He would stand around like that all day, smoking, contemplating the trees, leaning on some fender. The money from my lessons—I saw it in a flash—would make possible his squalid languor.

Have a good lesson? my mother asked.

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It was okay, I said, keeping my eye on the new husband as Mother pulled the car onto Britton Road.

I hope you did, she said. I certainly hope you had a good lesson. It means a lot to have a good lesson.

That was Mr. Cox back there, wasn't it.

Mr. Cox?

Miss Harris' husband.

I didn't see anyone.

He was right there. Leaning against her car.

I must not have noticed.

I'm sure it was him.

Well, maybe it was.

It was him all right.

Maybe it was. I wouldn't know the man if I saw him. I've got other things on my mind.

What could she see in a man like that.

I said I didn't see him.

Where are we going.

Home.

We don't usually go this way.

We had passed Western Avenue and now were in Britton, which was like a small town, though really part of Oklahoma City, on the very edge of it. There was a Main Street with a T. G. & Y. store, a C. R. Anthony Department Store, a Western Auto, and a drugstore that had a good soda fountain. Western Avenue connected it to the city, to supermarkets and shopping centers and subdivisions such as Nichols Hills, where we lived. I rode here often on my motorscooter and liked to imagine that I had come to a town far away from Oklahoma City, perhaps in Texas or New Mexico. In the drugstore I purchased cherry cokes and then examined the rack of paperback books near the cash register to see if there were any new titles among the westerns and detective thrillers and to read the covers avidly. I picked up a copy of *Playboy*, then a bold new magazine, and discreetly flipped to the centerfold photograph, careful not to linger too long on it before putting it down and then feigning interest in *Field and Stream* or, even duller, *Sports Illustrated.*

At the drugstore my mother pulled into a parking space.

You drive, she said.

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Since I had never driven a car before—aside from backing and pulling forward on the driveway—this command came as a surprise.

You've got to learn sometime, she said. She took a deep breath and opened the door. I realized that I was to trade places with her, and I managed to do as she did, get out and cross to the other side, the driver's side.

Have I said that my mother was a beautiful woman? She was. I found this somewhat of an embarrassment, another instance of how my family was not right. Mothers were supposed to be plump and gray, slightly younger versions of grandmothers, but mine was trim and dark, with auburn hair and hazel eyes that flashed brilliantly. Around the house during the summer she wore shorts and high-heeled wedge sandals, usually with a halter top. When she picked me up at my accordion lesson she was on her way home from the volunteer work that she did every Thursday at the big Veterans' Hospital on N. E. 13th Street, and so she always wore what she called her gray lady uniform, in fact a gray dress rather like a nurse's uniform except for the gray color. But on this Thursday she wore a scoop-necked blouse, white with bright red and green trim around the neckline, and a flowing full skirt, also white, trimmed with the same bright colors as the blouse. So preoccupied with scorn of my music teacher's husband, I had not even noticed this bold departure from her usual Thursday style of dress until, seated at the wheel of her DeSoto, I watched her get in beside me, the engine running smoothly, air conditioner humming.

Push the lever to *R*, she said. You know how to back up. Just watch where you're going.

Where are we going?

I don't know. For God's sake, I don't know. Nowhere. Anywhere. Will you just go, please.

But I had been struck by two unnerving realizations: first, that I was scared to death to back into the traffic that was steadily coursing through Britton, and, second, that my mother was upset. Tears were in her eyes, and she began to rummage through her purse, at last pulling forth a crumpled tissue. It did not seem the right time for a driving lesson. The car loomed large and lethal, but at the same time was danger-

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ously vulnerable. I kicked at the brake pedal and pretended to have trouble finding *R* on the gear-shift column.

I don't know, I said. Maybe there's too much traffic.

You just have to watch where you're going, she said, wiping at her eyes with the tattered, lipstick-stained tissue. It will be all right. Just go.

And so I backed the big DeSoto out onto Britton Road ever so slowly, looking from one side to the other. Sure enough, a car had to stop in order to allow me onto the street. Mortified, I pressed the accelerator. The immediate surge forward took my breath away. I gripped the wheel firmly and vowed to remain calm. One only had to concentrate, watch the road ahead, glance now and then into the rearview mirror. Would I have to stop? No, I had traveled this route often on my motorscooter and knew that there was no stoplight or sign between us and the open highway. Once outside Britton—a matter of only several blocks—traffic would fall off, the wide flat prairie land on either side of us, the highway stretching straight ahead as far as the eye could see. The knowledge of this ahead was comforting, and as we crept past the last of the storefronts, and then at last the frame houses on their small treeless lawns gave way to the full breadth of the sky and the land leveled out into immensity, I was certain that I could drive this DeSoto to the end of the continent if need be.

My mother began to sob, softly at first, so that I could easily enough pretend not to notice, and in fact I succeeded quite well in not noticing, such fun it was to see the highway ahead, to feel the power of the big engine, a hundred times greater than that of my motorscooter, that strange sense of limitlessness, as if this were my life itself opening up before me, a straight line to eternity.

I glanced at the speedometer. We were going sixty-five miles per hour, yet scarcely seemed to move, so vast was the land that we moved across. The sobbing had grown louder, and, in the quickest of glances, I saw that she covered her face in her hands. The crumpled tissue had fallen to her lap.

It's no good, she said. Everything's all wrong. Every time you think things are getting better, they only get worse.

I didn't know what to say. Really she didn't seem to be ad-

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dressing me, but rather talking to herself. Perhaps she didn't mean for me to have heard. The road was smooth. Soon we would come to the Edmond turnoff. A few distant trees bent to the strong wind and now and then a red sworl of dust whipped across the highway. The sky was pale blue, cloudless. I was absolutely confident.

Keep going, my mother said. I can't go back yet. I don't care if we end up in Tulsa. I'll tell you when to stop.

I drove and drove. We skirted the city, staying always on the edge of it, away from the traffic, making an almost complete circle by the end. It is one of the most dreamlike memories that I have, those dizzying plains all around, the red soil badly eroded, the tufts of sharply pointed weeds bordering the highway, now and then the skyline of the city appearing, those twin bank buildings rising like grand gray monuments tall and eternal from the sealike vastness, now to the west, now to the north, at last again to the south, and then windmills in the middle of nowhere or oil derricks thumping steadily into the depths of a land that looked as dry as the dust ever blowing across it. The car rolled along, heavy and smooth and quiet. My mother's tears subsided. She told me about the sorrow of her life, and her voice might have been the very sound of the landscape. I cannot imagine that place, that straight highway, those gullies and the red flat land, without hearing again her voice as it came to me across the car, the grief in it as pure as any I have ever known.

The reason for my mother's not wearing her gray lady uniform on that particular afternoon was that there had been a special party on the ward. The veterans had seemed to languish of late, and the women who gave their own time to cheer up the men had agreed that something extraordinary had to be done. Thus the party. It was to be, my mother said, a *real* party. Everyone was to dress up for the occasion in his best clothes. There was to be music, dancing, entertainment, refreshments, the ward decorated with bright-colored streamers and balloons. The balloons would contain messages and the veterans were to be encouraged to puncture those balloons and find the messages, which would be cheerful, optimistic phrases from *The Prophet* and *The Power of Positive*

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Thinking. My mother did not care for this last idea. It was treating them like children, she argued, when what they needed was to be treated as responsible adults. How else were they to regain their pride and dignity. She was overruled. The men of the ward were *not* like other men. In many ways they were like little boys—boys who had been asked to assume the responsibilities of manhood before they were ready. They needed to find their lost childhoods. My mother saw that there was no arguing with the other women. At least they had accepted her suggestion that uniforms be put aside in favor of nicer clothes, even though one of them said quite vehemently that to do so was to invite trouble. Wasn't that silly, my mother said to me, and of course I agreed, having no idea what such trouble would mean.

I was never to find out exactly what did happen at that Thursday's party to make her so unhappy, though she talked to me often of her work with the veterans, of how much that work meant to her and at last of the one veteran that she took a very special interest in. Sometimes we went for long drives similar to that first one, drives that she spoke of to my sisters and my father as instruction, but increasingly that instruction occurred late at night in my room, when I lay in the top bunk of my bed only half awake. Sometimes she actually slept in the bottom bunk—other times she returned to her own bed before dawn. I confess that sometimes, tired from a particularly busy night carhopping at the Orange Julius stand, I fell asleep as she talked. Nonetheless, I remember with absolute clarity the underlying sorrow, the sense of lamentation and attendant relief, the strange feeling of shared grief, the notion that I had become for her a confidante, as much sister as son.

I constructed in my own mind a version of the Thursday party, seemed at last to see it as though I had been there. I put this version together as I rode out the highways that crossed wheat fields and prairies, rutted soil and pasture, the same territory we covered in the DeSoto for my instruction. The special veteran would have been waiting for her. He was a lot like me, she had told me, not in looks of course, but in temperament. *Sensitive* was the word she used. Shy. Kept to himself and thought a lot. Liked to read, and read everything

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he could get his hands on. She brought him books, paperbacks that she purchased at Rector's downtown, and he received them eagerly, gratefully.

He never had a chance, she said. His father mistreated him and then he was drafted and sent to Korea. Something bad happened to him over there. Maybe something bad happens to them all, but some can't forget it. Some are haunted by what they had to go through. Can you imagine? It's hard for us to imagine.

I could imagine.

She would have had a book for him on that Thursday, a mystery novel with a lurid cover, carried in her large straw handbag. He would stand to one side of a group of talkative men, somewhat taller than most of them, his face in shadow. Music comes from a portable record player, one similar to my sisters', the size of one of my father's suitcases, with the speaker across the front. It is lively music, music to jitterbug to, to rhumba or samba to. Xavier Cugat, Tommy Dorsey, Bob Crosby. Occasionally a ballad sung by Jo Stafford or Margaret Whiting, a love song, not too sad. Records the women would have brought from home, records such as my parents had, in book-like albums, six big 78's per album, each in its own slot within. Some of the men bat at the balloons. Others dance—this part was harder to imagine. I was no dancer myself, and I concluded that neither would her veteran be. But the others—I had little to go on, junior high school formals, to which the girls wore stiff gauzy dresses.

She would encourage him to dance, for she was a good dancer herself. I had heard my father say so, and even remember seeing him dance with her in our living room. They reminded me of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, whose movies my sisters loved to watch on television, my father spinning her and twirling her, drawing her close, dancing cheek-to-cheek, twirling again so that her full skirt fanned outward and she began to laugh, saying, That's enough now. You'll knock something over. This room is too small, the way you dance! Oh, my father said, you always spoil the fun. Just like your mother! Come on. Let's show the kids what real dancing is like.

But she had had enough, and so the best I could do was

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picture something like that, incomplete but lovely while it lasted. For the others though, not for my mother and the veteran whom she wished to help. Off to the side the two of them stand. She looks pretty in her white dress, so pretty that the other women are envious.

You should dance, she says. Dancing is good for you.

No, he says, I don't feel like dancing.

Well, would you like a cup of punch then?

No, thanks.

I've brought you a book.

I'm tired of reading.

And with that he turns and leaves her, making his way across the crowded dance floor, through the crepe paper streamers and the floating balloons and at last down a long narrow hallway and into the tiny room where she would not be permitted to follow him. The room would have bunk beds—made of black metal though, not varnished maple like mine—and a single curtainless window with bars on the outside. He would throw himself upon the bottom bunk and glower at the mattress springs above him, his jaw clenched tightly. Then his terrible memories overcome him and he closes his eyes, sinks into the nightmare of war, bombs flashing and exploding all around him, friends shrieking and dying everywhere.

My mother makes her apologies to the other women.

I have to take my son to his music lesson, she says. He can't carry that heavy accordion on his motorscooter.

She sought understanding from me. While I pretended to understand, much in fact escaped me. I believe I learned to become a good listener, and perhaps, after all, that is a kind of understanding. Coming home late from the Orange Julius stand, my lungs filled with the sweet night air, I sat on the living room floor of the silent house and counted my earnings, then went to bed and awaited my mother's arrival in the bunk beneath me. Sometimes I heard a sound from my parents' bedroom first, the raised voice of my father, and then their door opening, shutting, and her soft footsteps in the hall. I imagine her pausing to look into my sisters' bedroom, seeing them deep in their own dreams, motionless in their

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twin beds. Why had she not chosen one of them to confide in? One was too young surely, only seven at this time, but the other was just a year younger than I was. This one, however, Carolyn, the elder of the two, was considerably more spirited than I, even scrappy, and often argued long and hard with her mother over issues that I would have let pass as trivial. She seemed to me in fact to go out of her way to pick a fight, and both girls got along better with their daddy, though even he could become the focus of their tempers. There is something with mothers and daughters, finally and significantly, that does not exist with mothers and sons: fundamental antagonism, no doubt a rivalry. Whatever, I was chosen and not one of my sisters.

She came to my doorway and I heard her breathing, even now hear it, and smell again the scent of her perfume, a smell in memory more carnal than floral. Are you asleep, she asks. I know that an answer is not required. She enters my room, and I hear her pull back the bedspread, the sheets, and then feel the bedframe move slightly as she eases herself into the bunk beneath mine. Are you awake, she asks. This time I say yes.

Once she said this: I knew nothing about men, not the first thing about love. My mother told me nothing. I was married to another man before your father. I was too young and though I cared deeply for him and he loved me that marriage failed. I thought that I would never marry again.

All my life, she said another time, has been a sacrifice for others. I didn't finish high school because my father needed me to bring in an extra paycheck to help support the family. I was the oldest, and happy to help. I know that he was grateful. I worked in Baker's Shoe Store downtown, selling hosiery, and then at the jewelry counter of John A. Brown's. That's where I met your father, and when we were married another long sacrifice began. I learned what it meant to be a mother as well as a wife, to be responsible for a home. Please understand. I don't resent what I've been given. I love my children, all of you. But I have to ask—do you understand this—when my own time will come, when I can begin to live for myself. Is that so much to ask for, a life of my own?

I said no, that it certainly was not, but I really had no idea

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what it would mean for her to lead a life of her own. I responded on an abstract level, guided only by a sense of fairness. Life was short, she said, and was one's own. You could kill the life within you if you neglected it. The life within—that's what mattered, that's what must not be allowed to die. It had to be kept alive.

From their hidden homes in the big elm outside my window, the crickets whirred, and above the branches that I loved so much to climb upon in the daytime, the stars no doubt held their own in the broad night sky. Everywhere an eloquence that would not—no matter how much it insist—be comprehended.

I did not practice my accordion often in the summer, but some mornings before the heat grew deadly I strapped the heavy instrument to my chest and labored mightily to perfect "Claire de Lune" or "Santa Lucia" or "*The Washington Post* March." My own favorite was something called "Sweet Sugar," a fox-trot in the key, if I remember correctly, of B-flat. Dutifully, to please Lorena Harris (now Mrs. Cox), I worked on chromatic scales, on arpeggios, on bass runs. In the afternoons I rode my motorscooter or had my instruction in the DeSoto.

Before I knew it, August came. In that month heat was general, day and night. My father purchased a small air conditioner, still somewhat of a novelty in those days, and had it installed in a living room window. This room, shut off from the others in order to keep the chilled air effective, became a cool refuge. When the air conditioner was turned on in midmorning, we all sat around it, watching "Queen for a Day" or reruns of "My Little Margie" or the old movie musicals that my sisters were so fond of. Summer was my father's off-season, since the high schools that he called on were not in session, and so he often sat there in his big green chair, sometimes with a *Daily Oklahoman*, the cigar smoke puffing out from behind it. Mother kept busy in the kitchen or in the back of the house, claiming that the heat did not bother her, though frequently joining us by mid-afternoon—the heat of the day, as she called this time. On milder mornings she might be found stretched out on a towel in the backyard, tanning her legs.

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In our talks she came to speak less of her youth—of her overly stern mother and sweetly indulgent father—and more of her dissatisfaction with my father. They argued fiercely all during those years. This had become simply a fact of our family life. Why don't they get divorced, Carolyn wondered. How can two people live together and fight all the time. It made no sense to me either, but mine was not an inquiring mind in those days—if it *ever* has been! Maybe they still love each other, I said to Carolyn. In my heart I knew that this could not be true. Hadn't I heard her say as much.

She began to urge me to visit the ward with her.

I've told the men about you, she said. It would mean so much if you came to visit them.

She wanted me to play my accordion for them. "Lady of Spain," she kept saying. Wouldn't I play "Lady of Spain" for the men on the ward.

It was the last thing I would have chosen to do to end the summer, but there was no resisting her. She wanted "Lady of Spain." She would have it. I thought that she might have wanted "Whispering Hope" or perhaps my last recital piece, a complicated arrangement of "The Stars and Stripes Forever" that she had praised fervently, even though I'd made several mistakes and left out an entire section. But it made no difference to me. I'd played "Lady of Spain" almost from the start of my lessons—in increasingly difficult arrangements—and was fond enough of its quick pace and rollicking rhythm. In the sixth grade I'd played it for my girlfriend, who did a dance to it with castanets, on a program for the entire school. Perhaps it was that triumph that my mother remembered. Or perhaps the melody was a favorite of one of the men. Whatever, she had got it into her head that I would play "Lady of Spain."

All right, I said. When?

Thursday, she said.

This gave me five days to prepare myself. Once I had agreed, and the date was set, I began to feel intensely nervous, the way I always felt before those yearly recitals in the Baptist churches that Lorena Harris found for her students to perform in. The more recitals I played in, the more nervous I became beforehand. What got me through was the thought that it would soon be over.

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The dynamics of "Lady of Spain" were crucial. So Lorena Harris had taught me, and as I took out the accordion and slid my shoulders into its cushioned straps I seemed to see her clearly before me. She wore a sky blue blouse of thin gauzy material and a tiered skirt that made a soft swish when she crossed her legs. A strand of her dark hair had come loose from her hair net and the top button of her blouse was undone. Soft here, she says, raising a finger to her lips. Now *crescendo*!

Sometimes the student who had his lesson after me did not come, and my lesson continued overtime. We were surrounded by tiny folding chairs and back of us hung a large bulletin board filled with color pictures of Jesus at the important stages of his life, from manger to cross. On a desk to one side of Lorena Harris the Sunday school lesson books were stacked in three even ranks. A banner across one wall displayed in large black letters John 3:16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. . . .

My mother would be waiting in the car of course, but so would the new husband of Lorena Harris. It was pleasant to think that he was kept waiting. I imagined it while unsnapping the bellows of the accordion, saw him as I listened to the air flow through the mysterious corridors of that strange instrument. He wore pink-soled suede shoes and leaned on the fender of her little Plymouth, his palms pressed against the clean and shining metal. He would have to wait. "Lady of Spain," I played. *Lady of Spain I adore you.* And when I was finished, I played it again.

I practiced hard for the men. As I have said, I was scared to death. There was an edge to this fright that made it worse by far than the usual recital nervousness. Who, after all, were these men that were so eager to hear me play? What did a veteran look like? They have feelings, my mother had told me, just the same as you and me, only they've never been given a chance. But what would they look like?

At the Orange Julius stand the lights that encircled the lot bobbed back and forth in the strong wind, and I fancied them eyes, the eyes of the veterans. With the girls who drove up in their fathers' big cars, I flirted as usual, but my heart was not in it.

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I asked my father if sometime in the fall I might go along with him on one of his sales trips. I must have been feeling guilty for having agreed to play on the ward. Unlike those veterans, he had never been to war. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, he had gone down to enlist, but was turned away because he had recently become a father—I was the child, of course.

Yes, he would take me along with him sometime. He did not look up from the book he was reading—I think it must have been Sandburg's *Young Abe Lincoln*—and did not remove the cigar from his mouth. The floor lamp shone brightly on his head, through his thinning hair and onto his pink scalp. When my mother and I left for the Veterans' Hospital, he was not home. I thought it just as well. He prided himself on her not having to work outside of the house and did not even approve of her volunteer work. Perhaps also he was suspicious, a little jealous. He had good reason to be. Years later, when my mother at last went through with her divorce, she told him she planned to marry one of these veterans. And she did. I could not have foretold such an event, but I sensed the reason in my father's fear of her work.

I hope you know how much this means to me, she said to me in the car.

I assured her I did.

It did not matter how well I played, she said. It was the gesture itself that counted.

I told her I understood.

I did not. Otherwise why would I be shaking so? When at last it came time to strap on the instrument, I felt faint. The great black thing was impossibly heavy.

The men milled about, tall and short, young and old. Some wore blue pajamas with white trim at the sleeve and pants-cuff. Others dressed as if for a formal ball, white shirts and bow ties, gleaming black shoes. Still others wore tee shirts and blue jeans. I thought there were hundreds of them, but surely there could not have been more than thirty. The room itself was small. Couches and chairs had been pushed back against the walls, and some of the older men, their mouths hanging open and eyelids half shut, slumped in the big cushions, clutched the arms of the chairs as if they expected sud-

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den movement. Through the high oblong windows above the seated men, the glass so thick it was almost opaque, I saw the bars that I had imagined.

Gray ladies circulated among the men, carrying trays of paper cups and paper napkins. One of the women I had met before—she had come to our house on several occasions—but the others, perhaps there were six of them altogether, I had never seen. Yet they looked familiar. The gray dresses, of course, were identical, the same stiff uniform my mother wore. They smiled pleasantly, handing out the punch with ease. They might have been, I realized, the mothers of my friends.

My mother led me from group to group. *This is my son.* I shook innumerable hands, gripping firmly as my father had taught me. No, they invariably said, you couldn't have a son this big! They were all well-mannered, soft-spoken, polite. One man kissed my mother's hand.

I must have been brought there to meet the man my mother would later marry, though I remember no such meeting. The man I've come to know as my stepfather must have been one of the inconspicuous ones. He would have preferred watching me from a distance. My mother has explained to me that he cannot work because he refuses to be bossed around. They live on a government pension in an apartment complex near Will Rogers Field. Fearing robbery, they seldom go out. It is not an unfounded fear. Apartments all around them have been hit. He recently screwed shut their windows and during my last visit sat up all one night, his recliner turned to face the window, watching to be sure that no mischief was done to my poor, shabby car.

My father remarried—twice, but the first marriage was brief. She was a schoolteacher, a widow, and must have known right away that she had made a mistake. By then he had become a little wild, spending a lot of time in singles bars and not keeping track of where the money went. He lost his job—also more than once. Took to representing several companies, no longer handling profitable class rings and diplomas but textbooks, which he lugged around to the adopting school districts all over Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle. He no longer worked on his designs for class rings, of course.

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The house where he'd had his office was sold when he went into bankruptcy, not long after I started college. In the end he achieved a degree of stability. His last marriage lasted four years, until his death by heart failure quite suddenly last year. He was sixty-nine. He had begun to draw and paint again and was tolerably solvent.

That afternoon in the ward I played "Lady of Spain," and as I played, my fear passed away. In its place came a strange elation. The men listened, and their listening was of a different order from what I felt at recitals. They too might have played the tune, the sentimental quality of it giving way to a passion that went into the depths of all music and included my mother in it, drew her into it. *Lady of Spain*! When I saw her, that gray lady, that dark-eyed Nazarene atremble in the shadows of shades of men, it was as if I saw all the women I would love. This was music, this was the life within, this was the love I would sell my soul to possess. The air that set the reeds to quaver, God help me, might have been my own breath.

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BERT O. STATES

I Think, Therefore I Dream

We have always assumed that dreams constitute an act of speech. Since the dream, unlike other body activities, uses speech and imagery it must therefore be speaking to someone—the self to itself, the god to his prophet, the dead to the living, or even (in premonitory dreams) the future to the present. Dreams, in short, make sense, if one has the code to piece it out. Freud offered the most stunning code of all in his theory of wish fulfillment and repressed sexual memory, and since the shapes of the world are infinitely amenable to sexual interpretation we have carried this code through dozens of variations before suspecting that it may have its limitations. But it is possible to ask now if we have not been making a mistake all these years: might it be that the dream, whatever its diagnostic values, is not an act of speech in which the unconscious cryptically speaks the unspeakable to the conscious mind, but a process by which the brain maintains its operational efficiency in a world that is constantly bombarding it with experience?

In substance, this is the theory of Christopher Evans[1]: the dream, at least in its primary function, is not speaking, it is simply working. If it is still "saying" things about us while it works that is because now and then we are, so to speak, overhearing them as they travel along its busy circuits. Actually, Evans is not concerned with the language factor of dreams. This is simply an inference I draw, by extension, from his theory, which seems to me the most provocative adjustment of our perspective on dreaming in the post-Freud era. In fact, my interest here has mainly to do with applications of his theory that rightfully did not concern him. These relate to some problems I was dealing with in an earlier *Hudson* essay

[1] *Landscapes of the Night: How and Why We Dream*, ed. by Peter Evans (New York, 1983).

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titled "The Art of Dreaming."[2] The links between art-making and dreaming are obviously very strong. But the connections we have made have been vague and analogical, beginning with the notion that in the dream state the mind somehow divides itself into a playwright-audience-participant arrangement whereby the dreamer writes the play, produces it, stars in it, and sees it on a holographic screen in the head, all at the same time—an impressive trick by waking standards. Among other things, Evans' theory might help us to temper the extravagance of this metaphor.

Specifically, Evans reverses one of Freud's major assumptions. Freud supposed that the purpose of the dream was to shield the sleeper from alarming thoughts and thereby preserve sleep. Evans' theory, based on an accumulation of several decades of neurophysiological research, puts it the other way around: it is the function of sleep to give the brain time to dream. We do not sleep because we are fatigued or because the world runs, out of habit, on the rhythm of day-labor and night-rest, but because we need time to process the tremendous amount of information absorbed during the day. If the brain is anything like its progeny, the computer, there is only one way this can be done, and for all organisms it is a high-risk proposition. The organism must temporarily become defenseless against its enemies; it must shut out all incoming data—going, as computer people say, "off-line"—while the brain sorts and stores the day's sensory experience in its memory banks, correlates it with earlier storage (short-term memory with long-term memory) and updates its programs—including elementary ones dealing with social conduct, skills, manners, preparations (or "rehearsals") for possible conflicts to come and more urgently conflicts that have already arrived. In short, we need sleep so that the brain can enter the day in its ledgers, somewhat as a bank draws its shades in mid-afternoon so that the bankers can tally the day's transactions without the annoyance of customer demands.

[2] "The Art of Dreaming," *The Hudson Review*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (Winter 1978–79), pp. 571–586. Throughout the essay, I will use the word *brain* when I am referring to "the convoluted mass of nervous substance contained in the skull . . ., the organ of thought, memory, or imagination" (*OED* #1 and #3) and the word *mind* when I am referring to "the action or state of thinking about something" (*OED* #7).

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What then is a dream? What we think of as a dream is only a fractional amount of all these operations the brain performs when it asks the body to close its doors on the world. A dream is "a momentary interception by the conscious mind [while asleep] of material being sorted, scanned, sifted, or whatever" (p. 141) during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. This sorting process may even extend into non-REM sleep, but the dreams we experience during sleep represent only a glimmer of the dream-work being carried on in the brain's banks. This work, of course, can only be detected by the waves that appear on the EEG (electroencephalogram). Many of these dreams will be forgotten on waking, but the chances that they will be recalled are highest if the dreamer is wakened when the REM activity indicates that a dream is in progress. The fact that we forget most of our dreams—and some of us do not even remember dreaming (though the EEG indicates otherwise)—suggests that dreams, or most dreams, are not primarily of any conscious value to the dreamer, or at least that they are not hieroglyphic messages but a series of hierarchical thought processes occurring on several levels of brain activity. Some are apparent, some are not. But the old concept of a resting brain is now discarded. The fact is, the brain's activity appears to be just as intense in sleep as in the waking state. So most dreams, if dreams were primarily instruments of communication, would be useless, somewhat like talking into a dead phone. Moreover, some theorists (Ramon Greenberg, for example) think that remembered dreams are failures, problems the brain couldn't solve that involve strong tensions. Presumably, successful dreams, then, would be the ones we don't even know we had or remember only as a sort of blur. A corollary to this theory is the fact that people deprived of sleep soon show acute psychological distress and when permitted to sleep they immediately increase the amount of REM sleep, and apparently the dreaming that it signals, until they are back on track.

The most intriguing support for the Evans theory comes out of the research of the French neurophysiologist Michel Jouvet. Jouvet surgically modified the brains of experimental animals so that their muscles, normally deactivated in sleep, continued to respond to the brain's instructions during the sleep state. In their REM sleep, cats suddenly jerked to life

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and began performing the distinctive predation movements of all cats—stalking, crouching, and springing at imaginary prey (p. 151). Even well-fed domestic cats performed the same exercises. The obvious conclusion is that the cats were dreaming of hunting and that this might be a basic high-priority dream program of cats in which they rehearse their roles and sharpen the tools of food-gathering. It goes without saying that Jouvet could not extend his findings to human beings, but one might infer that our predation dreams simply involve more complex techniques of survival and adjustment. Dreams, then, would be useful in the sustaining way that practice is useful to the pianist, the tennis player and the boxer who keep in shape by playing "as if" games in preparation for the real games to come.

To me Evans' theory is welcome not because I am convinced it is correct (how could any dream theory be verified?) but because it offers such a promising alternative to our received theory of dreams. Let us consider one major adjustment in our thinking that the Evans theory may offer, the idea that dreams emerge from a region of the brain called the unconscious. Evans does not deal very much with the unconscious except in brief discussions of Freud and Jung, and there is some indication that he subscribes to the idea that the unconscious does exist (p. 100). My point, however, is that his theory, unlike most, does not require a concept of the unconscious as we normally define it. One can see the dream as a processing activity and one can explain the peculiarities of its logic and its so-called distortions without presuming that it is all being directed from another part of the brain where the *real* thinking is taking place. I will pursue this idea in a moment, but we must first consider the problem posed by the concept of an unconscious. Here I am essentially following Sartre and D. B. Klein (who is following William James). Klein suggests that the unconscious is an invention rather than a discovery. We have patterned our notion of the unconscious after what we know of the conscious mind, rather as we pattern our ideas about God after what we know about ourselves. In sum, we have made it in our own image; we have given it the status of a consciousness within a consciousness that is inaccessible simply because it is beneath cognitive

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understanding, speaking only through its affects, and protected, like Kafka's law, by all sorts of powerful doorkeepers posted at the preconscious border (repression, the censor, displacement, etc.). The symbols and images of the dream, then, are symptoms of its wishes and directives which the dreamer may not understand but which the analyst may de-code and thereby peer into that uncivil realm peopled by drives and presided over by the monstrous id. The dream is the false-hieroglyphic text which makes sense only if you presume that it is coded, and the idea of a code necessarily presumes that something with an independent intelligence has done the coding for some purpose. Hence the dream, as the guardian of sleep, is never what it appears to be. It is always, as Freud says, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

In place of the unconscious Klein would put non-sensory or imageless thinking. Put simply, this is thinking we do not know we are doing because it offers no signs of itself. For example, as I write, many of the words come as fast as I can put them on paper. But frequently I reach an impasse. I do not know how to say what I want to say next. I look out the window, I pace the floor, a phone call interrupts my interruption. Eventually I return to work and suddenly—if I am lucky—an image, a connection, or "the right word" will have arrived, though I am not aware of having consciously conceived it in my ruminations. This experience, of course, is common in any problem-solving situation and it simply means that the brain is working at the non-sensory level. Klein is arguing that what we call the unconscious consists in this kind of thinking. The unconscious is any mental activity that we perform unconsciously. "But this is not the same," he says, as "a separate or segregated mental realm in the form of an unconscious mind conceived of as divorced from another mental realm in the form of a conscious mind"[3]:

> The concept of non-sensory ideation as a synonym for reflection, thinking, judging, and other cognitive processes suggests the unity of mental life. It does away with the notion of man being endowed with *two* minds, namely a conscious mind and an unconscious mind. It also dispenses with a not uncommon tendency to

[3] D. B. Klein, *The Unconscious: Invention or Discovery? A Historico-Critical Inquiry* (Santa Monica, 1977), pp. 216–17.

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> personify or reify the unconscious into some sort of spectral homunculus or psychic entity controlling the content of dreams, initiating blunders of speech and action, and even solving problems while the conscious mind is asleep (p. 215).

I will leave to psychologists the problem of just how much this is a purely terminological matter or to what extent Freud's unconscious was intended as a metaphorical (rather than a physiological) concept. But if we do away with the unconscious as a separate region of the brain what have we lost? We have not done away with drives or instincts or defense mechanisms or complexes; we have simply construed them as aspects of thought and formations of our psychic history. We have, in fact, demystified the activity of the brain by releasing it from a certain *spatial* and self-competitive division (a mind beneath the mind) that is implicit even in Freud's denials that his "psychical topography" had anything to do with "anatomical localities."[4] And in doing away with the two-mind system, we find that there is no reason to explain the distortions of dreams as the products of displacement and censorship.

We are now in a position to see that everything that takes place in the dream is an activity of cooperative thought, much of which (as in waking life) falls beneath sensory awareness. Moreover, the concept of non-imagistic thought helps us to deal with the problem of how we can dream without experiencing the dream or remembering that we have dreamed. We might say that such dreams—if they can be called dreams—are simply unfolding at a meta-imagistic level of thought. They are not quite dreams, or not yet dreams. We can only speculate about what such thought might be about or what form it may take, but a great deal of the sorting, scanning, and processing of data that Evans discusses might be occurring at this level. In fact, if we fuse the findings of the Evans and Klein books we get a much clearer sense of the possible relationship between dreaming and thinking of all kinds. A dream, or what we think of as a dream, may simply be one kind of nocturnal thinking, just as the day-dream is one kind of diurnal thinking. Being both imagistic and auditory, a

[4] Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey (London, 1957), XIV, 175. Hereafter, *SE*.

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dream is the part of ideation that lies nearest to cognitive, or "finished" thinking. This does not mean that it is more rational, only that it is more a perceptual phenomenon. We might think of a dream as being like a resistance in a circuit or like a seismographic excitation of the smooth flow of non-imagistic processing. Finding ourselves, as we invariably do, *in medias res* in our dreams ("I was in this room. . . .") might be the result of non-sensory thought gradually converting itself into a dream. It might be a helpful analogy, in this connection, to recall something Kierkegaard observed about Socratic thought which frequently interrupts its dialectical procedures with a myth. When dialectic fails to solve the problem, we resort to the mythical which, Kierkegaard says, is not addressed to the understanding but to the imagination. "In the mythical representation," he goes on, "both time and space have only imaginary reality."[5] In the mythical portion of our thought the poet in us "dreams into being all that the dialectician . . . sought to establish" (p. 139). This is rather fanciful and I offer it not as a theory but as a way—a myth, if you will—of accounting for the onset of the dream out of non-imagistic thought.

Of course it may be a simplification to say that the dream replaces non-imagistic thought. It seems likely that the mind continues its other work beneath the dream. One of the most fascinating aspects of dreaming is the phenomenon that leads us to speak of the dream as "the other reality," or the sense of being completely within a world we have created in our own heads. In the dream I seem to be my waking self. I respond to the dream situation as I might in waking life, even to assessing the motives and intentions of other people in the dream. I think, I feel, I evaluate, I am myself. The dream has deprived me of none of my mental equipment except the ability to discern that I am using it in a situation that is not real. In lucid dreams, in fact, I may even be aware of being in a dream. Within my dream, then, my non-sensory thought continues to process the visual data presented by the dream, even as the dream itself is part of the processing of the data of my real day. I have been drawn recursively into my own

[5] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony: With Constant Reference to Socrates*, trans. by Lee M. Capel (Bloomington, 1965), p. 137n.

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thought process where I continue to think thoughts about the thoughts I am thinking in the dream-form. Thus day experience and dream experience stand in a parallel relation as phenomena of perception; both are attended by the same sub-processes of non-perceptual or involuntary ideation that enable us, in daily life as in dreams, to adjust continually to what is happening to us. To sum up the point: the Harvard neurobiologist David H. Hubel offers a wonderfully succinct account of the scene in the brain:

> In brief, there is an input: man's only way of knowing about the outside world. There is an output: man's only way of responding to the outside world and influencing it. And between input and output there is everything else, which must include perception, emotions, memory, thought and whatever else makes man human.[6]

But where to put the dream—is it output or input? It is certainly a reaction to the world's input, something the brain does by way of response to experience and therefore an output of a sort. But this output has the virtually unique characteristic of reducing the world's input to still another world, re-made in its own image, that becomes, in effect, a recycled input, a twice-told tale, to which we, as dreamer, have a sensory re-reaction that is approximately like our reaction to the world.

Where dreaming is concerned, of course, all theorists are in the situation of the blind men and the elephant. The fact is, there is no scientific theory of dreams beyond the neurophysiological stage. All hypotheses about dreams are unavoidably built on the personal memory of the ex-dreamer and the dream memories of other ex-dreamers, and this guesswork is compounded by the fact that we recall only pieces of dreams. Nevertheless, in this spirit of uncertainty (and with far less temerity than my tone may suggest), I would like to advance several postulates that seem to me to emerge from the Evans-Klein findings.

The dream does not disguise. If Evans is correct in rejecting Freud's thesis that the purpose of dreams is to protect

[6] David H. Hubel, "The Brain," *Scientific American*, 241 (3) (September 1979), p. 50.

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sleep, the entire notion of distortion and censorship is superfluous and a dream becomes just what it is—one of the bluntest of psychic experiences. It suppresses nothing, neither images of death, lust, or incest, nor the pain of rejection or loss, nor the repugnance of excrement and filth. Moreover, one might have a pleasant dream on the eve of one's execution. Dreams, Jung says, "are a part of nature, which harbors no intention to deceive, but expresses something as best it can, just as a plant grows or an animal seeks its food as best it can."[7] This view is apparently becoming more and more attractive to dream and brain specialists as the functional similarities between brain and computer are more closely studied. For example, Jonathan Winson endorses the computer theory of dreaming in *Brain and Psyche*, and while he holds to Freud's idea of the unconscious it is not as the dark house of the id but as the nerve center of the brain's processing of information. Winson's unconscious, in fact, is quite close to Klein's non-sensory thinking, and it may be all but academic whether we throw out Freud's unconscious, as Klein suggests, or revise and retain it along Winson's lines: "I believe that the phylogenetically ancient mechanisms involving REM sleep, in which memories, associations, and strategies are formed and handled by the brain as a distinct category of information in the prefrontal cortex and associated structures, are in fact the Freudian unconscious."[8] For Winson dreams are "a window on the neural process" and it is a matter of chance that we are aware of them at all and perhaps irrelevant whether we remember or forget them on waking. Thus dream distortion is not a defense mechanism but "a reflection of the normal associative process by which experience is interpreted and integrated" (p. 214).

It would seem, then, that the so-called distortions of dreams are distortions only when recalled by the waking mind. When the dreamer awakens and says, "I was in this strange room that had no walls," he expresses only his hopeless exile from the dream world. For any verbal description

[7] C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston, ed. by Aniela Jaffé (New York, 1965), pp. 161–62.

[8] Jonathan Winson, *Brain and Psyche: The Biology of the Unconscious* (Garden City, 1985), p. 209.

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reduces the dream to a deformed *representation* of reality, of interest only because it is implausible or uncanny. But the logic of the dream is not to represent—or to distort—a plausible room but to produce a space coterminous with an emotion. The dream image is half thought and half perceptual experience. In the dream it is possible to watch a football game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the philosophy of Schopenhauer. Thus the dream image is a hybrid phenomenon, at once spatial and ideational, born at the point where a feeling condenses into a form, has in fact no choice but to become form. The dream image does not *arouse* feeling; it is rather the feeling that arouses the image, which is so deeply saturated in the feeling that it is impossible to distinguish one from the other. This is one reason that the dream image seems so strange on recall: it has in effect become severed from its precise psychic charge, without which it is the absurd and trivial parody of a reality ("I was riding through heavy traffic on my son's tricycle," "We were all sitting in this tree eating dinner").

The triviality and absurdity of the dream image, for Freud an endless source of symbolism, leads us to another hypothesis: the dream selects its content algebraically from the dreamer's experience. I have in mind here the sense of algebra as a calculus of general symbols dealing with the relations and properties of things rather than with the things themselves (arithmetic). In this respect, the dream is, as Aristotle would say, less a personal historian than a poet: it expresses not *what* happened but the *kind* of thing that has happened and can happen again, or what a happening might signify as a psychic residue. There is, therefore, at once an extratemporal or Parnassian[9] quality in the dream image, together with a degree of versatility, or X-ness, in what it will bear. The image is to some extent a carrier on which the dream feeling rides, like a hitchhiker. As a consequence, it is unstable as an identity and dynamic as a form. This is what makes it possible for the dreamer to think, semi-lucidly, during the dream, "It is my cat but I don't recognize it," or "It is mother

[9] Parnassian refers to the painting from the School of Parnassus in which all the philosophers in history are gathered on a single mountaintop, thus forming "a group in the conceptual sense" (*SE*, IV, 314).

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but she is someone else." To take the more interesting case: suppose I am talking to mother in my dream and I become vaguely aware that she has become a woman I have never seen. I go on talking to her all the same, as if she were still mother. And she is—in principle—or rather, in feeling, for I have simply transferred my feeling for mother to the strange woman. I am mildly disappointed by this transformation, but it is forgotten as thought of mother fades and the stranger asserts her unique personality.

What can we make of this? There is a side of mother I do not know? I am afraid she might desert me and my fears are realized in this incident? At the bottom of motherliness there is something alien? Is something sexual going on here? (Who *is* this stranger?) Such questions take it for granted that there is something meaningful behind this transformation: the dream is speaking in tongues. But let us suppose that this is not the case, that the feeling inhering in the event (mild disappointment) is precisely appropriate to it and that if the feeling had been stronger—say, fear of mother's disappearance or even incest!—the dream would have pursued it openly. In other words, the transformation was not performed as a thematic act, but was the result of the dream's "normal associative process" of making images to suit its thoughts. Mother had simply ceased to be relevant. Having conjured her my dream proceeds to revise her, briefly retaining her identity but generating a new person out of some seed of association, beneath interpretation, that was suggested by her image and manner.

This would be unacceptable to most psychoanalytic theories of dreaming which assume that the dream is efficient and knows exactly what it is doing. There is no such stuttering in the language of the dream. But this notion imposes a staggering, and unnecessary, demand on the dreamwork. It virtually presumes either that the details of the dream have been worked out in advance and stored in cassette form (as a current theory runs[10]) or that the dream has an uncanny ability to keep ahead of its story and have the next event ready without so much as a pause in the swift current of its progress

[10] See Daniel C. Dennett, "Are Dreams Experiences?" *The Philosophical Review*, LXXXV, 2 (April 1976), 151–171.

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(for example, try staying on the subject in a daydream!). But the brain that dreams is the same brain that makes mistakes in logic, has difficulty solving perplexing problems, is "not good at math" or at remembering names and directions. So it is possible to ask if the dream is not subject to the same failures, false starts, dead ends, and errors in thought as the waking mind. Might not the dream be producing, as Jung says, "as best it can" what amounts to a "first draft"—that is, a series of images on a given theme, some of which must be rejected or amended, or phased out? This would not appear as a failure or a revisionary process to the dreaming consciousness, but as an experience like those of waking life—one, however, that will appear distorted or chaotic when recalled. In short, the dream is thought as it occurs, not thought as it has been perfected in another part of the brain and passed into the dream in a finished state, like an edited film. The dream does not have time to think because it is itself the thinking.[11]

The subject of distortion brings us inevitably to dream symbolism, which is of course the indispensable agent of censorship. This is the most deeply ingrained principle of Freud's legacy to psychoanalysis and it is reenforced by the fact that the technique of symbolic interpretation works so well on so many other subjects—for example, literary texts. But the goal and delight of symbolism in poetry and art is that it be recognized as such; even if some symbols are difficult or esoteric we somehow know they are symbols. Freud asks us to believe that the mind would create symbols whose symbolic value, even the fact that they are symbols, is lost on the dreamer. This is one of Wittgenstein's chief complaints about Freud's

[11] This idea runs quite contrary to the thesis of Jean-Francois Lyotard in "The Dream-Work Does Not Think," trans. by Mary Lydon, *Oxford Literary Review* 6:1 (1983), pp. 3–34. Essentially, Lyotard offers an elaborate revision of Freud's theory of wish-fulfillment in which the dream does not fulfill a particular wish but fulfills the wish of desire, a force located in the unconscious, to cast itself on the dream-thoughts in the form of a figural image, or a "violence perpetrated on linguistic space" (p. 9). I don't know what to make of this idea because it is not clear to me what desire itself is. It is treated in vague homuncular terms throughout ("desire . . . disguises itself," "desire breaks the law," etc.) but it is difficult to see what form it may take in neural terms. Could one not as well say that the heart desires to beat, or the lungs desire to breathe air? Moreover, if desire can desire, in what sense is desiring different from thinking?

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method: "Consider the difficulty that if a symbol in a dream is not understood, it does not seem to be a symbol at all. So why call it one?"[12] For whom is it a symbol? Freud, he said, was really thinking about the symbol from the perspective of the analyst and what the dreamer could be brought to accept. In this connection, he notes (as many others have), that Freud rarely deals with explicitly sexual dreams. The obvious implication is that in such dreams Freud's theory of concealment was at its most vulnerable, for such a dream would have no secret meaning to be divulged. In any case, it seems highly improbable that a dream would openly produce images of sexual organs one night and disguise them the next as turnips, top hats, or open doorways unless there were something other than censorship in the dream symbol—in effect, a true symbolic expressiveness similar to that aimed for by the poet, though for altogether different purposes.

In my earlier essay on dreaming I dealt with this issue of expressiveness at some length, but I would like to return to it because I wonder whether the word symbol, which I used repeatedly, is really the right word, or concept, for the process about which we are talking. Moreover, there is much more to be said about the formation and character of the dream image. Essentially, Winson shares my feeling that what we call a dream symbol is really, as he puts it, a "combined idea" or "a visual means which . . . most efficiently expresses a particular unconscious concept" (p. 217). For example, in the well-known faucet dream, cited by Calvin Hall in 1962 (and discussed further by Winson and myself), the young man's sex organ takes the form of a faucet, not (we all agree) as a disguise but as an expression of the penis' emissive capacity (the dream terminates in an ejaculation). It is certainly harmless enough to refer to the faucet as a symbol, but in what does this process of expressing an aspect of something actually consist? I suggest we can learn more if we track the process further down the tropological scale to concepts like metonymy and metaphor. The question we might ask is: in what respect might dreaming be like the thinking we do normally?

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. by Cyril Barrett (Berkeley, 1966), p. 44.

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And we find in these two master tropes two common strategies by which the work of thought gets done in and out of poetry. I will bypass the heavy intellectual traffic that these two terms have carried since Jakobson (especially Lacan, Lévi–Strauss, and Lyotard) because most of it accepts, as a given, the notion of a Freudian unconscious and is therefore concerned only with the linguistic basis of distortion and censorship. I should say in advance that we are not dealing here with figures of speech per se but with the mental events for which their designated terms are our best words. Dreaming is not like art; art, rather, is like dreaming. That is, dreaming precedes art in the imaginative order as the ur-process out of which the sophisticated techniques of fiction and poetry descend. In effect, my project here is to describe the dream phenomenon with the help of the principles of rhetoric—assuming we can think of them as anything but textual operations. For example, imagine this highly metaphorical text as a dream—

> Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
> To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
> In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
> To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendant world. . . .
> (*Measure for Measure,* III, i, 118–26)

—that is, imagine it not as a felicitous union of images (*thrilling region, viewless winds,* etc.) but as the thing itself, projected all about you on the canopy of the mind, taken as reality because it is unmediated by the distractions of reality or by a category of disbelief. Dreams rarely get this rowdy and when they do we call them nightmares. But this freedom to confuse categories was the metaphorical basis of dreaming long before we knew what a metaphor was. So, as applied to dreaming, we are really speaking about what a metaphor might be like if you were trapped inside of one.

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For reasons which I hope will become clear, I see metonymy and metaphor as primary tropes, to which I would join, respectively, synecdoche and irony as adjunct modifiers. We have, then, two main dream processes: the metonymic-synecdochic and the metaphoric-ironic. I am under no illusion that the four master tropes will offer us a complete taxonomy of dream strategies, but the idea is to approximate, in more or less familiar terms, the imaginative means by which the brain thinks dreams into existence.

In metonymy the strategy is, in Kenneth Burke's words, "to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible"[13] (as when we speak of *the heart* rather than the emotions, or, in the case of the young man's dream, a faucet rather than the state of sexual excitation). Metonymy, Burke says, is a form of *reduction*, and one can immediately see its affinities with Freud's principle of condensation, though not as Freud envisioned its function. The basic idea, however, is that as the dream thought descends, demiurgically, from abstraction, we have a metonymic reduction of psychic energy into images which can be "seen" by the brain and used either to build concepts or to dream dreams. Metonymy, for present purposes, is that operation by which the brain conceives the image that marks the onset of the dream proper or, thereafter, of any scenic shift in substance or theme that might be provoked by the dream in progress.[14]

We can get a clearer idea of what this process may entail from the hypnogogic interval preceding sleep in which we "metonymically" experience the onset of images *ab nihilo*. As any student of dreams knows, all that is required to produce these images is a state of passive receptivity to the shifting play of light and shade on the brain's blank optical screen. Here, obviously, there must be a great deal of collusion between the eye and the imagination because one can lie in the dark with "nothing in mind" and coax vague shapes, even pinpoints of entoptic light, into the remarkable sharpness of a face or a landscape you will never see in this world. Of course

[13] Kenneth Burke, "Four Master Tropes," *A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives* (Cleveland, 1962), p. 506.

[14] A good text on this subject of how images descend from abstraction is Rudolf Arnheim's *Visual Thinking* (Berkeley, 1969).

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the hypnogogic image is not a dream, and dreaming does not necessarily follow from it. What gives birth to these images beyond involuntary physiological stimulae (retinal excitation, body temperature, muscular contractions, etc.) we do not know, but surely here we are getting a preview, while awake, of how the dream reduces energy to imagery.

The metonymic condensation of thought into image, then, would be the critical first stage in the dream process. But we must now add the services of metonymy's sister-trope, synecdoche, in order to account for a further dimension of the process. Unfortunately, there is more confusion about these two tropes than any of the others. Some theories consider synecdoche a sub-form of metonymy, and others reverse the emphasis. What we can say with some assurance is that both tropes are forms of vertical reduction whereby ambiguities and totalities are dissolved into portable substances. Synecdoche, in Burke's definition, overlaps upon metonymy in the sense that "a reduction is [also] a representation" (p. 507) in which the part represents the whole, the whole the part, the cause the effect, etc. In other words, metonymy is basically a qualitative reducer of attributes into conventional emblems (authority into sceptre) and synecdoche is basically a quantitative reducer of unified systems into representative units, usually those that are the most visually functional in the whole (ships into sails, sailors into hands). There are probably all sorts of synecdochic designs in dreams, such as when I find myself literally driving down the freeway on a set of wheels or when I find I have gone on vacation with only a toothbrush. But I am interested primarily in the overall sense in which the dream is representative of the psychic "system" of the dreamer. "Artistic representation," Burke says, "is synecdochic, in that certain relations within the medium 'stand for' corresponding relations outside it." Moreover, there is another sense in which the work itself is "internally synecdochic . . ., the parts all . . . being consubstantially related" (p. 508). If we are considering the dream as a mode of thinking in which the dreamer's psychic experience is somehow represented and stored, then the dream is synecdochically a part of the larger outside "whole" of the dreaming organism, which is being continually amended and updated by the process of

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representative reduction, and it is also internally consistent in that all its parts are related.

This may seem self-evident but it takes us to the source of some of the dream's most remarkable effects. As an example, let us take the common dream experience of getting acquainted with new people and places. In waking life this is a condition of repeated exposure (as when we "get to know" someone or "learn to like" a place). To know something is to be able to re-recognize it. In dreams the sensation of "knowing" someone occurs as an *état accompli.* Suppose that in a dream I find myself in a place where I have taken a new job. There are no old friends here and I am in the process of meeting people. A and B I know rather well from interviews, correspondence, and one or two social occasions (A seems to have been my sponsor); X and Y I know less well and I am now introduced to Z for the first time. Shortly, Y approaches to tell me something helpful about the place. I am embarrassed because I have forgotten his name and I make a mental note to ask A—or better still, C, the department secretary, who seems to be the sort of person who would understand my lapse. All of these people, perhaps five minutes old by the dream-clock, exude that abundant geniality that comes with wanting to put the new person at ease. Yet they are all distinct and precisely individuated, down to facial expressions and mannerisms, even the way C quietly oversees the group like a hostess giving a party. But each one has been minted freshly for this dream occasion. Apart from any immediate tensions that may have produced the dream, what is happening here amounts to a sensory paradox. How can I feel the sensation of varying degrees of acquaintance with these people I have never met, who do not even exist, unless the sensation itself—in all its complexity—has produced the people who are simply representative of it? What my dream seems to be recapitulating, or drawing on, is my personal history in these situations. It has caught the perceptual declensions of the "getting acquainted" experience perfectly by creating people who form a model of all such new places and new people in my past. These are the parts it takes to make up the whole of such an experience. Not precisely this number, but these kinds. In fact, since there are usually several anonymous peo-

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ple hovering about at such functions, my dream has thoughtfully supplied a number of "extras" to round out the scene. The truly remarkable thing is how the dream can summon the necessary parts that will constitute the whole experience. The scene is, one might say, archetypal, and archetypal is another term for the whole that lies behind, and inheres in, all the parts.

It is impossible to separate out the precise operations of metonymy and synecdoche in such cases. But it seems reasonable to say that there is, on one hand, the immediate factor of the birth of the image out of the dream thought or feeling and, on the other, the integrative or genetic factor that sculpts and controls the image as an offspring of the dreamer's personal history. In this connection it is useful to recall an underrated characteristic of the dream—it has no interest in reconstructing a specific experience from the dreamer's life, even the fresh one it will select as the day residue of tonight's dream. The original experience, which is stored in the memory as perceived and available to recall, is all but irrelevant in itself. Why should the dream repeat the history of the dreamer when all of its mechanisms are precisely those of conversion and reduction rather than imitation and description? What the dream offers instead is a fictitious formula of the experience in which the dreamer relives its emotional contours but not the experience itself. The abandoned barn on the hill in which I played as a boy and can to this day recall in my mind's eye is of no concern to my dream as a precise place it will take me to tonight in my nostalgic mood. It will take me to a barn of its own. Yet I will find myself back there again because the particular doors, ladders, and lofts that I remember were, after all, only the given conditions of my contentment there. Only in the familiarity, the taken-for-grantedness, did the contentment arise that would become the subject of a future night's dream. It is not the barn I will find familiar but the emotion of my contentment in it and this is what will lend to my new dream's image the status of the old place. And so it is that a "false" image can stand in for the real one with no loss of verisimilitude. The dream image is not a memory deformed but a feeling reconstituted out of the chance blocks of form available to my brain on an instant's notice on a particular night.

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The mission of synecdoche, then, is to confine the dream to an orderly pursuit of its theme, to which each of its parts strives to make its contribution. This is not to argue that dreams are as orderly as, say, the typical bedtime story, but the marvel is that they achieve an expressiveness that could not be duplicated in the waking state. The advantage of thinking of dream images as tropes, rather than as symbols, is simply that it gets us away from the idea that all images are referring to something that isn't there. A metonymy isn't something that refers to a hidden significance but something that conveys in its very form a complex significance that could not be unravelled without access to all of the stored experience in the brain's neural labyrinth. Consequently, we have no problem now with Wittgenstein's complaint because it is not a matter of smuggling something past the dreamer but of the image being an adequate summation of a feeling. It is no more necessary that the dreamer know, or not know, the significance of the image than it is that he know his heart is beating or his body processing its food. However, we are already verging on our second set of terms.

If there is a master trope of all tropes it is metaphor, which seems to be ever susceptible, at least in our modern definitions, to all the abuses of its own acquisitive nature. Jonathan Culler suggests that a metaphor is a combination of two synecdoches, since "it moves from a whole to one of its parts to another whole which contains that part."[15] Whether correct or not, this suggests the difference between the metonymic and the metaphoric processes: if metonymy and synecdoche are forms of reduction, metaphor is a form of expansion—that is, the operation by which the mind associatively adds one thing to another. "The mind," I. A. Richards says, "is a connecting organ, it works only by connecting and it can connect any two things in an indefinitely large number of ways."[16] I look at a massive bank of clouds and, behold, they become galloping horses or monstrous faces. This place reminds me of that place. Sam reminds me of Charles whom I have not seen in years and it occurs to me that both of them look like Eisenhower. The truth is, I do not *make* these things

[15] *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, 1975), p. 180.
[16] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London, 1976), p. 125.

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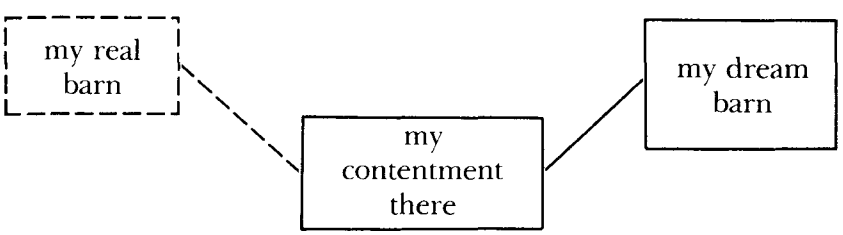
into these other things; they become them without my permission. And here we have another cryptic evidence of unconscious thought, which projects itself out of me into nature, as if it were an outside force. My mind is all around me, and thought is carried forth metaphorically in my confrontation with the shapes of experience.

For metaphor we might substitute Freud's principle of *displacement,* at least to the degree that in both there is a locative shift from one thing to another and a certain carry-over of function or attribute. Most prominently, the dream is metaphorical in that it is a model, or sequence of models, based either on real past experience or on experience that could conceivably take place (it is not necessary to have fallen from a tall building in order to have a dream in which you do). All experience falls into classes; there is, so to speak, nothing new under the sun, and the dream's avoidance of actual experiences of the dreamer is nothing more than a metaphorical substitution of a likeness for a reality whose tenor, to use Richards' term, is an old emotion. One might say that the dream is an *implicit* metaphor, one of whose terms, or vehicles, is absent but implicit in the dream emotion. For example, the barn dream might look like this:



So characteristic is experience and the dreams arising from it that we might develop a morphology of dream plots and character types similar to those in Propp's analyses of the folktale (villain, donor, dispatcher, princess, etc.). With dreams, of course, we would not be looking for orderly plots with beginnings and endings, marked by probability, complication, surprise, and denouement, but for those marked by the structural logic of emotional experience. Even dreams

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that unfold as complex intrigues are probably based on the model of detective fiction rather than on personal experience. It would follow that dream characters would not be interlocking agents that bring on each other (as the villain brings on the helper in the folktale) but the ingredients necessary to allow the model to exhaust its emotion. It is even possible that the model of some dream emotions may persist for an entire lifetime. For instance, a life-series of dreams might be based on the search for the lost love of one's youth (*la princesse lointaine* of French "dream" fiction) whose function, as it was (alas!) in life itself, is to remain just beyond reach behind the doors of the house the rejected dreamer can never hope to enter.

Another kind of dream metaphor concerns what we might call the Frankenstein dimension, or the dream's unbelievable ability to create its own people. As a rough guess, over half of my dream people are people I do not know who are "made" in the dreamwork. But I suspect that they are all remnants of old friends, acquaintances, and public figures pieced together as composites and given life by an emotional charge. I have just been reading about Nancy Burson's astonishing photograph, *Androgyne,* which is a blend of snapshots of six men and six women, fed into a computer that was programmed to merge facial features.[17] I doubt you would know the photo was a composite by looking at it, but the best word for it is dreamlike. The "person" looks at you out of deep sad eyes with that oddly frontal and generic expression you see in the police sketches of the wanted assailant. It is an intense, hypothetical face and if you saw it in the street it would give you the Proustian sensation of having an old experience. My first thought was that the brain itself couldn't do something that subtle, then I remembered that the brain had invented the computer. But here, it would seem, is at least a metaphor for the sort of metaphorical bonding that might be *behind* all of the invented people of our dreams. The people who appear in dreams are either remembered wholes or new wholes made out of remembered parts, and of course there is no

[17] *Harper's* (June 1985), p. 28.

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guarantee that they will remain one or the other. In any case, they are always metaphors.

How the dream manages the feat of developing an even rudimentary plot is anyone's guess, but a possible theory might run like this: as soon as the dream thought or feeling, based in some such "model" experience, has metonymically condensed itself into a parent image (perhaps that point where the EEG begins to pick up REM signals), the image seeks out its destiny as a metaphor, which is to construct a world imbued with that particular feeling. For the most obvious characteristic of the dream image is that it is *driven on.* Metaphor is to the dreamwork what myth is to the Socratic dialectic—"the perpetual unrest of thought forever separating and combining, which thought is unable to hold fast because it is the forward thrust of thought itself."[18] In effect, then, the image spawns images and thereby takes that course of imaginative movement we call fiction, separating and combining its elements along the axis of a dream plot which is nothing more than a volume of feeling spending itself in a path of least resistance—which is to say, maximum intensity.

This brings us to the relationship of metaphor and irony. We can pair the two as fraternal strategies, as we have metonymy and synecdoche, because they are both ways of moving beyond single entities: metaphor is a way of uncovering the likeness of two different things; irony is a way of uncovering a thing's extreme potential for not being what it appears to be. Metaphor says, "This is (like) that"; irony says, "But this *is* that!" Both, then, are shocking rather than soothing tropes in that they produce the surprise of a discovered symmetry, like that of the comic cognitio. Placed in the company of irony, we see that metaphor is anything but a stable figure, like metonymy and synecdoche; even as it advertises that it has sought and found unity and compatibility where "logically" we saw none, it has said, in effect, "you see how unreliable our categories are." Thus metaphor and irony are the binary tropes: they refer us to the duality of experience and perception, to transactions, concealments, and disclosures in nature. Ultimately, they present us with a mimesis of the self/other enig-

[18] *The Concept of Irony*, p. 137.

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ma and this, as I hope to show, is their greatest power in the dream.

Burke equates irony with dialectic and drama, and we can see how metaphor itself already leans in this direction. One metaphor inherently announces a dialectical world. The concept of resemblance is itself dialectical, for it presumes a concept of difference, as the idea of freedom presumes (is meaningless without) the idea of imprisonment. The surprise of metaphor is its double triumph over identity and difference, over one-ness and two-or-more-ness. The ironical basis of dialectic's thesis/antithesis is that you can never trust the world—or rather, you can trust it, more or less, to contradict you. As the dialectician puts it: all categories are unstable because they are imperfect, and this universal instability—this "internal fatality," as Burke puts it, built into the structure of macrocosm and microcosm—"places the essence of drama and dialectic in the irony of the 'peripety', the strategic moment of reversal"[19]—that is, what *could* happen if the world were perfectly imperfect and produced only perfect contradictions. But fundamentally, the dialectic habit is something built into the brain as a survival technique and in the dream where we are so frequently endangered we produce dialectical images—or we produce dramas, or, if you will, ironies.

Most obviously, in the dream irony takes forms like these: the last bus pulls away just as you reach the station—or, if not, the destination clearly mapped out by your friend is not there when you arrive; the vehicle that will speed you away from the oncoming enemy will not start; the narrow ledge that carries you above the abyss will always give way or get even narrower; finally, nature calls and there is no bathroom in sight. At such times, the dream world seems, as Barthes says of the tragic reversal, "ruled by a spite that can always find the negative core of happiness itself."[20] It is not that the ironies are always negative in dreams (we also have good luck), but that the stakes of disaster are always higher and dreams tend, on the whole, to put us in problematical situations. Behind such peripeties, then, is not so much an inherent cynicism in the dream as the spectacle of the mind's alert-

[19] *A Grammar of Motives*, p. 517.
[20] Roland Barthes, *On Racine*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York, 1983), p. 44.

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ness. So fine is the line between thought and image that "This could happen" is transmitted by the dreamwork as "This is happening!" In the dream the hypothetical and the real are identical.

What principally concerns me here, however, is not the reversals themselves but the spirit that makes them symptomatic of dreaming. Not all dreams are Aristotelian in structure. In fact, dreams tend toward a flat serial construction similar to the sequence of sideshow events in a carnival or to the stations of a medieval passion cycle (to place the dream somewhere between the grotesque and the sublime). But the negativity of lurking disaster and the attendant feeling of helplessness-to-prevent are simply synecdochic parts of a larger ironical force that holds sway over the dream. Here we are far above the figural into what we might call the visionary: that absolute negativity of the dream's boundless freedom to extend the self into every part of the dreamed world. Lacking the restraint of a "given actuality," as Kierkegaard says of the ironist, the dream is "negatively free"; it becomes "intoxicated . . . by the infinity of possibles," it plays in the mind's "enormous reserves of the possible."[21] Thus the dream is the only state of consciousness in which *being* can survey itself precisely free of repression (only in the daily world of manners and "musts" do we repress). In dreams idolatry of self is both cancelled and affirmed. In the dream we are both punished for the day's, or for life's, hubris and granted our pleasant vices. The dream giveth and it taketh away. It is of no matter, for the dream is *sans souci*: it simply defines our affair with actuality in a spirit of ironical free-play.

Thus conceived, irony is what leads metaphor, the image-maker, through the wilderness of resemblances to its embodiment of the self-other enigma. Irony, in itself, is unable to produce the dream, for among the master tropes it is unique in being non-pictorial. Irony is not a way of *seeing as* but a way of seeing *through* or *beyond*. It does not make images, it supervises their fate. It is to metaphor what Iago is to Othello: the goad that compels the dreaming hero, as Kierkegaard says, "to poetically produce himself." Through irony the self

[21] *The Concept of Irony*, p. 279.

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deploys its subjectivity into metaphors that have all the appearance of being the objective "others" of the world but are, in fact, only the self displaying itself in unrecognizable forms. Unlike Narcissus, the dreamer gazes into the pool and sees there a horde of stranger-selves, or what in the occult are called familiars. It all comes down to a single pervasive affect: I have made the dream but I cannot possess it, for the dream comes *from* me as if it were coming *to* me. Freud speaks of the tendency of dreams to combine "contraries into a unity or [to represent] them as one and the same thing."[22] The contraries I refer to here, however, are not contraries of meaning but of substance, beneath all interpretation or referral to a personal neurosis. To the sensitive dreamer, the self-otherness of the dream is faintly detectable in the images themselves: in the complicitous look in the eye of the dream–character, in the *slightly* intimate attention he pays me, even as he ignores or rejects me; overall, in the dream's efficiency in seeing that I am always at its center. Dream people are there *for* me, though far less ostentatiously than the stage actor is there *for* me. They allow nothing of my guilt, my desire, or my vanity, to pass unnoticed. Even the strangers know me.

The problem in dealing with all these processes separately is that we falsify the very nature of what probably happens in the brain. It would be absurd to think that we have described anything more than a crude rhetorical approximation of something that is beneath and prior to language, something that occurs as an involuntary and virtually instantaneous process in the neocortex. We assume only that the creation of dream images would entail such combinatory patterns of thought as reduction and extension, integration and negation. The master tropes are simply the elementary mental operations of imaginative production. "Give a man but one of them," Burke says, "tell him to exploit its possibilities, and if he is thorough in doing so, he will come upon the other three."[23] Thus in concluding our discussion with irony we are drawn back, through a competitive affinity in the terms, to synecdoche which, we have said, is the integrative force in the

[22] *SE*, IV, 318.
[23] *A Grammar of Motives*, p. 503.

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dream. It is through the discipline of the synecdochic impulse that the dream stays on its subject, producing parts that belong to the whole. Irony, on the other hand, is disintegrative, insofar as it is a strategy for avoiding final positions. On its own irony would succumb to the rapture of the infinite and would end up being "about" nothing but further irony (which is possibly what happens in those feverish dreams of sick people that seem to go everywhere and nowhere). But in the rigorous self-portraiture of the dreamwork, the ironic impulse must be contained within the design of the whole. So, like Plato's orderly white horse in the *Phaedrus*, where desire and rhetoric are so curiously teamed, it is synecdoche that restrains the license of the unruly dark horse and harnesses its wanton energy to the task of expressing only the "possibles" of the dreaming self.

Such, then, is a possible pattern and process of dream symbolism—not an activity of repression but one of expression and definition of a psychic history. It is hard today to see how Freud could have overlooked the brutal honesty of the dream and have claimed for this extraordinary mechanism the function of a concierge who keeps the house quiet while the body sleeps.[24] But it is easy to forget that it was Freud who discovered all of these processes and put us in the position of looking squarely at the dream without mystical lenses. The guardian principle was indispensable to Freud's system of censorship, condensation, and displacement—itself the keystone of his theory—because it was the only possible means of bringing the diversity of dream life on line with his obsessive nineteenth-century search for the primary purpose of dreams. Through these agents every dream image was assured a negotiable identity and all dream streets could be said to feed into the royal road. But why should dreams, any more than language or art, serve a single purpose, unless that purpose is broadly conceived as the individual's adjustment to reality? The alternative posed by the new neurophysiology is that dreaming is a phenomenon of normal thought, a *process* of thought, not one of its products, like the poetic image or

[24] I borrow this figure from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*: "This concierge maintains order and etiquette in the household of the psyche" (*The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Francis Golffing [Garden City, 1956], p. 189).

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the concept. Dreams contain their own meaning, Merleau-Ponty says, not as a "notational meaning" intended for interpretation but as the "direction of our existence" at the moment. "When I dream," he says, "it is the pulse of my existence, its systole and diastole."[25] Hence the matter-of-factness of the dream: it simply goes about its business. And like its fellow-laborer the heart, which can be metonymically seen as the seat of passion, or of sincerity, or of courage, the dream will cooperatively reduce to anything we like. If you treat it, as the ancients did, as a portent, it will be portentous; if you treat it as a diagnostic symptom, it will yield a diagnosis; if you treat it as a computer, it will compute. All such treatments have a way of becoming cultural synecdoches which innocently take as the whole the part that suits the need of the time. And it seems likely that even the computer analogy will turn out to be another partial view of the dream born of our enthusiasm for circuitry and information theory in the late twentieth century.[26]

In the meantime, however, it opens as many interesting questions as it has tried to answer. For example: why should we be invited to certain of our dreams and excluded from others? What, exactly, is being sorted, updated, and stored via the dream (the images themselves? the dream emotion? the dream structure?)? And why, finally, should neural processing take such an imaginative form, seemingly in excess of any possible biological function? This last question bears on the link between art and the dream which of course is a subject in itself. But: is it possible that the dream, like art (which we make because it is both useful and pleasing), might represent the brain's fascination with forms as much for their own sake as for their utility in the processing of information? If underneath all experience and perception we hear, in Foucault's delicate term, "the insistent murmur of resemblance," [27] is

[25] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (Atlantic Highlands, 1970), p. 285.

[26] For a readable account of the limitations of the computer-brain analogy and an accessible description of how the brain processes information, see F. H. C. Crick, "Thinking About The Brain," *Scientific American*, 241 (3) (September 1979), pp. 219–232.

[27] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of The Human Sciences* (New York, 1973), p. 69.

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it possible that the brain has no choice but to play among forms and resemblances—that is, to practice, without thinking about it, the "art" of thinking? Such an idea would assume that the tropical strategies, which I have only sampled here, are as basic to thought as muscles are to movement and that built into them is a biological incentive for the brain to use them well, "as best it can," as Jung might say; and that in doing so there is something *like* artistic pleasure, or at least something involuntary that makes it impossible for the brain to keep its hands off the image, and not to seize it and perfect it at all costs to the poor self which may be terrified at its own creation. The point would be: where, finally, can we draw the line between the art of dreaming and the physiology of survival? Or: at this infra- and pre-worldly level of thought, where imagination is nothing more or less than fiber and tissue stimulated by chemo-electrical charges, are we being metaphorical when we speak of the rhetoric of the synapse or the eloquence of the nervous system?

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LOUIS SIMPSON

Publishing Days

Sitting at a desk with my feet up
on the bottom drawer, reading manuscripts,

I have a vision of an author, in his underwear
at the typewriter. Through a window
come noises: boys playing ball, the diastole
of traffic. But he is oblivious,
typing away faster than I can read.

Now and then I leave my desk
and stroll about . . . look out the window
to the Hudson, where the ocean liners
tie up: the *Elizabeth,*
the *New Amsterdam,* the *Ile de France* . . .
and sit down again. The work is pleasant,
undemanding, and underpaid.

*

I go to literary gatherings
where editors rub elbows with authors
and agents. There are familiar faces:
Mailer, Styron, Baldwin, Bellow,
and many that have since disappeared.

The room is filled with smoke, a hubbub
of talk about paperback sales
and Hollywood contracts. The door keeps opening
with more and more crowding to get in,
like the cabin scene in *A Night at the Opera.*

*

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Sometimes I take the train
to Old Greenwich, Connecticut,
where the head editor has his house.
There the party is continuing . . .
more novelists, more literary agents,
and some of J. B.'s more personable neighbors:
a corporation lawyer, say, or psychiatrist.

We play games like Twenty Questions . . .
a game, I recall, in which you choose
one of the people in the room
and they all guess, by asking questions,
which one it is. Questions such as,
"If this person were an automobile
what kind of automobile would it be?"
Frequently this leads to a discussion
of the person's character . . . sometimes flattering
and sometimes, definitely, not.

*

One weekend there is a hurricane
and flood warning. Cars come up Old Clubhouse Road
from the beach, honking their horns.
But J. B.'s house stands on higher ground
and, he assures us, we are in no danger.

With time things that never happened
seem as real as things that did.
The house is floating out on the Sound
with lighted windows, and a voice
from inside it, faintly heard,
is asking, "If this person were a vegetable
what kind of vegetable would it be?"

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His Funny Valentine

He said, "I'd like to be a beautiful woman."

I was taken aback.
It sounded, and still sounds, most unlikely.
He was extremely attractive to women.
If you went with Mike Donovan to a party
or entered a restaurant, women would glance up,
see his face, and keep on staring.

I said, "Like Marilyn Monroe?"
I said that wanting to be someone else
was the same as wishing you were dead.

*

A woman said, "Tell me about Donovan.
You're his friend."
I said, "Mike's a drunk."
"Not that," she said, "something significant."

I told her about the affair
Mike had been having with Penny Baker.
"O that," she said. "He told me about it.
It's all over."

I might as well have tried to reason
with the 7th Cavalry charging down the valley.

*

He introduced me to Penny
in the White Horse. She was with her husband.
Later, in the course of conversation
something came up that required her

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to open her shirt and show us her breasts . . .
like lilies, with nipples like tea roses.
"Come on, Penny," said her husband, "cover up."

That same night Mike came over
to drink and talk. I left him to it
and went to bed. Some time later
I was wakened by a sound.

He was still there, on the floor, passed out,
with the phonograph set on automatic
playing "My Funny Valentine" over and over.

*

I might have told her he'd been writing a novel
ever since I'd known him, that he had a contract
with Simon and Schuster, but never wrote a page.

There was a new post-war generation
of young novelists. Every few weeks
there'd be a new first-novel sensation.

At the time there was a run on titles
that told the reader to do something:
to *Lie Down in Darkness* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain.*

Mike had a title for his:
Do Not Pass Go, Do Not Collect $200.
But, as far as I know, it never came to anything.

*

Though a man who saw him in Italy
years later, shortly before he died,
said he was still writing . . . on Janiculum
with a view of Rome through the pines.
He was living with an Italian woman.

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It was a far cry from the Village
and Albany where he grew up,
a boy with a taste for books
and baseball. He could still recite batting averages.

Later, when he went to the university,
it was jazz. And still, occasionally,
he wrote on jazz for the *Times*.

*

Speaking of *The New York Times*,
there was an item about a golfer
who was playing with a metal club
behind a hedge. He fell on his club
and it snapped and went right through him.

Some who were playing the eighteenth hole
that day, close to the hedge, heard screams,
but they thought it was peacocks.
Peacocks were one of the features of the area.

That night when I met Mike for dinner
we had both seen it. I quoted Robert Frost:
a "design of darkness to appall."
Mike said, Ambrose Bierce. And, of course, he was right.

This may have been why we liked each other.
We liked the sound of fate:
a horn heard at a distance
in the Valley of the Shadow.

*

When Mike stuck a knife in Penny
I didn't go to the precinct station
to bail him out—someone else did.
But ever since I've had an idea

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of what it's like: a woman in a yellow wig,
a purple skirt, and heels like stilettos;
a pickpocket; a cripple
arrested for indecent exposure;

the naked light; the crack in the wall
that loops like the Mississippi at Vicksburg;
the shadow of the cockroach
under the baseboard, lurking, gathering his nerve.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

The Return

To Paolo Bertolani

I The Road

I could not draw a map of it, this road,
Nor say with certainty how many times
It doubles on itself before it climbs
Clear of the ascent. And yet I know
Each bend and vista and could not mistake
The recognitions, the recurrences
As they occur, nor where. So my forgetting
Brings back the track of what was always there
As new as a discovery. And now
The summit gives us all that lies below,
Shows us the islands slide into their places
Beyond the shore and, when the lights come on,
How all the other roads declare themselves
Garlanding their gradients to the sea,
How the road that brought us here has dropped away
A half-lost contour on a chart of lights
The waters ripple and spread across the bay.

II Between Serra and Rocchetta

Walking to La Rocchetta, thirty years
Would not be long enough to teach the mind
Flower by flower their names and their succession.
Walking to La Rocchetta, leave behind
The road, the fortress and the radar tower

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And turn across the hill. From thirty years
I have brought back the image to the place.
The place has changed, the image still remains—
A spot that, niched above a half-seen bay,
Climbs up to catch the glitter from beyond
Of snow and marble off the Apennines.
But where are the walls, the wells, the living lines
That led the water down from plot to plot?
Hedges have reached the summits of the trees
Over the reeds and brambles no one cut.
When first I came, it was a time of storms:
Grey seas, uneasily marbling, scourged the cliff:
The waters had their way with skiff on skiff
And, beached, their sides were riven against stone,
Or, anchored, rode the onrush keels in air
Where hope and livelihood went down as one.
Two things we had in common, you and I
Besides our bitterness at want of use,
And these were poetry and poverty:
This was a place of poverty and splendour:
All unprepared, when clarity returned
I felt the sunlight prise me from myself
And from the youthful sickness I had learned
As shield from disappointments: cure came slow
And came, in part, from what I grew to know
Here on this coast among its reefs and islands.
I looked to them for courage across time,
Their substance shaped itself to mind and hand—
Severe the grace a place and people share
Along this slope where Serra took its stand:
For years I held those shapes in thought alone,
Certain you must have left long since, and then
Returning found that you had never gone.
What is a place? For you a single spot.
Walking to La Rocchetta we can trace
In all that meets the eye and all that does not
Half of its history, the other lies
In the rise, the run, the fall of voices:
Innumerable conversations chafe the air
At thresholds and in alleys, street and square

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Of those who climbed this slope to work its soil,
And phrases marrying a tongue and time
Coil through the mind's ear, climbing now with us
Through orchids and the wild asparagus:
For place is always an embodiment
And incarnation beyond argument,
Centre and source where altars, once, would rise
To celebrate those lesser deities
We still believe in—angels beyond fable
Who still might visit the patriarch's tent and table
Both here and now, or rather let us say
They rustle through the pages you and I
Rooted in earth, have dedicated to them.
Under the vines the fireflies are returning:
Pasolini spoke of their extinction.
Our lookout lies above a poisoned sea:
Wrong, he was right, you tell us—I agree,
Of one thing the enigma is quite sure,
We have lived into a time we shall not cure.
But climbing to La Rocchetta, let there be
One sole regret to cross our path today,
That she, who tempered your beginning pen
Will never take this road with us again
Or hear, now, the full gamut of your mastery.

III Graziella

We cannot climb these slopes without our dead;
We need no fiction of a hillside ghosted,
A fade-out on the tremor of the sea.
The dead do not return, and nor shall we
To pry and prompt the living or rehearse
The luxuries of self-debating verse.
Their silence we inhabit now they've gone
And like a garment drawn the darkness on
Beyond all hurt. This quiet we must bear:
Put words into their mouths, you fail to hear
What once they said. I can recall the day

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She imitated my clipped, foreign way
Of saying *Shakespeare*: English, long unheard,
Came flying back, some unfamiliar bird
Cutting a wing-gust through the weight of air
As she repeated it—*Shakespeare, Shakespeare*—
Voice-prints of a season that belongs
To the cicadas and the heat, their song
Shrill, simmering and continuous.
Why does a mere word seem autonomous
We catch back from the grave? The wave it rides
Was spent long-since, dissolved within the tides
Of space and time. And yet the living tone
Shaped to that sound, and mocking at its own,
A voice at play, amused, embodied, clear,
Spryer than any ghost still haunts the ear.
The dog days, the cicada had returned
And through that body more than summer burned
A way and waste into its dark terrain,
Burned back and back till nothing should remain,
Yet could not dry the mind up at its source:
Clear as her voice-print, its unyielded force
Would not be shadowed out of clarity
Until the moment it had ceased to be.
Downhill, between the olives, more than eye
Must tell the foot what path it travels by;
The sea-lights' constellations sway beneath
And we are on the Easter side of death.

IV The Fireflies

I have climbed blind the way down through the trees
(How faint the phosphorescence of the stones)
On nights when not a light showed on the bay
And nothing marked the line of sky and sea—
Only the beating of the heart defined
A space of being in the faceless dark,
The foot that found and won the path from blindness,
The hand, outstretched, that touched on branch and bark.

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The soundless revolution of the stars
Brings back the fireflies and each constellation,
And we are here half-shielded from that height
Whose star-points feed the white lactation, far
Incandescence where the single star
Is lost to sight. This is a waiting time.
Those thirty, lived-out years were slow to rhyme
With consonances unforeseen, and, gone,
Were brief beneath the seasons and the sun.
We wait now on the absence of our dead,
Sharing the middle world of moving lights
Where fireflies taking torches to the rose
Hover at those clustered, half-lit porches,
Eyelid on closed eyelid in their glow
Flushed into flesh, then darkening as they go.
The adagio of lights is gathering
Across the sway and counter-lines as bay
And sky, contrary in motion, swerve
Against each other's patternings, while these
Tiny, travelling fires gainsay them both,
Trusting to neither empty space nor seas
The burden of their weightless circlings. We,
Knowing no more of death than other men
Who make the last submission and return,
Savour the good wine of a summer's night
Fronting the islands and the harbour bar,
Uncounted in the sum of our unknowings
How sweet the firelies' span to those who live it,
Equal, in their arrivals and their goings,
With the order and the beauty of star on star.

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In the Borghese Gardens

For Attilio Bertolucci

Edging each other towards consummation
On the public grass and in the public eye,
Under the Borghese pines the lovers
Cannot tell what thunderheads mount the sky,
To mingle with the roar of afternoon
Rumours of the storm that must drench them soon.

Cars intersect the cardinal's great dream,
His parterres redesigned, gardens half-gone,
Yet Pluto's grasp still bruises Proserpine,
Apollo still hunts Daphne's flesh in stone,
Where the Borghese statuary and trees command
The ever-renewing city from their parkland.

The unbridled adolescences of gods
Had all of earth and air to cool their flights
And to rekindle. But where should lovers go
These torrid afternoons, these humid nights
While Daphne twists in leaves, Apollo burns
And Proserpine returns, returns, returns?

Rome is still Rome. Its ruins and its squares
Stand sluiced in wet and all its asphalt gleaming,
Street fronts are caged behind the slant of rain bars
The sun's already melting where they teem:
Spray-haloed traffic taints your laurel leaves,
City of restitutions, city of thieves.

Lovers, this giant hand, half-seen, sustains
By lifting up into its palm and plane
Our littleness: the shining causeway leads
Through arches, bridges, avenues and lanes
Of stone, that brought us first to this green place—
Expelled, we are the heirs of healing artifice.

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Deserted now, and all that callow fire
Quenched in the downpour, here the parkland ways
Reach out into the density of dusk,
Between an Eden lost and promised paradise,
That overbrimming scent, rain-sharpened, fills,
Girdled within a rivercourse and seven hills.

Fountain

Art grows from hurt, you say. And I must own
Adam in Eden would have need of none.
Yet why should it not flow as a Roman fountain,
A fortunate fall between the sun and stone?
All a fountain can simulate and spread—
Scattering a music of public places
Through murmurs, mirrors, secrecy and shade—
Makes reparation for what hurt gave rise
To a wish to speak beyond the wound's one mouth,
And draw to singleness the several voices
That double a strength, diversify a truth,
Letting a shawl of water drape, escape
The basin's brim reshaping itself to fill
A whole clear cistern with its circling calm,
And the intricacies of moss and marble
With echoes of distance, aqueduct and hill.

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JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

Father

My old father believes, even in his last days;
that is why he isn't a lover or a poet.
He cannot drown himself in water. Or in awe.
And the cicadas throb in the haze of the hours,
and our lives do not allow us
to see into their hearts
or to interpret their silence when they've ceased
to be.

But that is how it is to be left behind,
when dreams of the dying
breathe in the rising of the sun,
and they smell of life—
as I shut the bedroom door softly
and he raises his heavy-lidded eyes, drops them
and asks: "What am I doing here with you?"

A deep wrinkle of the light closes my eyes.
Above is the sky and stars lie in it.

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Ann

This summer is as bare as the last one
had been. Fires lurk in the hills beyond the river,
mocking the empty altar in my neighbour's house
and the lost hour of vows. Pale pigeons flying
in silence; and a lemon rain-tree flower drifts
carrying its crown of farewell. A silence
that makes me invoke your name again: "Ann?"
May winds flog the trees, and the murmur of your voice
passes by the vacant swings under the peepuls
that fail to awake from dreams in which they live.
What makes one suffer the thought
that silence owns the mind? The present
which memory will not enable us to live in?
Meaninglessly I reach for someone's hand.
For as we move from one hour to another
I know I'll be here again before summer is scarcely gone.
Unconcerned I watch a stone fragment from a ruined temple
being set up ceremoniously on a pedestal,
into quiet wonder, a deity;
and I hear the stir of the wind among the dead leaves
on my heart's ground as the evening's first star appears,
springing out of the flames of the burning ground beyond,
a faint flower of ash: "Ann?"

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Days

These days.
They are long and don't end.
I pretend.
If the days had only robbed me
I would have been in a rage.
But where's my anger now?
The days merely contain.
Come, wave to me, I coax my day,
the way one waves to a little child.
But it doesn't seem to go away.
The days are not even in the way.

Leaning against a tree
I am one with the sky.
There may have been days
I followed for a while,
as they softened in the light,
those I found among the shadows of my life.
A day behind the door,
one keeping watch,
another a ghost
wandering in the garden.
And one probably anxious to return.

These days.
Sometimes
they just move my mind
a little.
Like cattle crossing a road,
they pause without knowing and stare beyond them,
then walk on.

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DICK ALLEN

Adirondack Town: An Idyll

Mountain interference kills the radio
and I am home again.
White pines cling to the upper Sacandaga
as if they were holding it from closing: nurses' hands
and the wound runs deep and old. The cold
wind from Canada is blowing wooden rowboats
against their wooden docks, clunking and splashing,
and every puddle in the road this evening
has a little lattice of ice that's crept across it,
I break as I walk. It's not as if
time stood still—the ESSO sign at the corner
is EXXON, and the cemetery gate is padlocked—
but that it eddies here, as thought sometimes
will meet with stiff resistance and curve off,
leaving a deeper pool beneath a bluff of shale,
one you can swim across with several strokes,
or dive and touch bottom—something I have missed
ever since childhood. Not strangely, my impulse
is to whistle, and I do: *Via Con Dios,*
A Man in a Raincoat, The Great Pretender,
but stop when a porch door opens and a girl comes out,
takes one look at me and disappears,
her face a weeping petal in a woolen cowl. Fog swirls
on the peaks of Hadley, Marcy, and I think of comets—
their tails like rivers shorn from their beginnings—
as they go parabolic through the universe. A collie,
in a backyard with a clothesline, barks a tired
warning, then just growls. A few thin snowflakes
fall beneath the town's one streetlight marking
where the road turns up toward Conklingville
and I turn back. This winter will be a rough one:
rock-holes in the Old Mill windowpanes

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mean more joblessness. Kerosene lanterns. The smell
of woodsmoke and new cords of wood stacked where
there used to be lawns. And now a boy
appears behind me on a bicycle,
slows to give me wide berth, pedals on
until he goes, no hands, into his driveway.
At the bridge
where I've parked my battered car beside the stone
abutment carved with Uncle Rollin's name, I lean
over the parapet. Floating upon the water,
the moon is a bicentennial medallion; even stars
seem to be floating, though they might be lily pads
spangled by distance. My hands are clenched
into themselves. Oh my God,
and what if this should end? The Sacandaga
spills from the Adirondacks like dark blood
of wolf and deer and of the great bear roaming.

The Postmaster

A blue-haired woman in the house with trellises—
beautiful big red roses like crushed drinking cups
climbing up them toward the gingerbread—
would rise every evening from her widow's bed
to greet my father. The mail he brought her
wasn't much: a postcard from her niece, a flyer
from Montgomery Ward's, but he liked doing it,
he told me—it was something in his spirit,
that mysterious feeling that thrives on walking just
a step or two away from the beaten path
to do a favor. "Why not?" was always his answer
when someone questioned him about the other
people he befriended—like the Coshburns,
our town's richest family, its only blacks, so spurned
by our neighbors, so envied, that I never
remember anyone else out with us when we'd curve

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croquet balls on their great green lawn. There were also
the Hiroharas, he back from the camps. We'd go
out bicycling and end up in their little garden
with the pool and small stone bridge and stunted pines
and pebble path, and boulders, flowers, and my father
would have some tea. He would stir
it awkwardly, his hands too big. He looked funny
nibbling sweet rice cakes. Everyone knew he was crazy
for those people, people who felt wrong the way he did
at the end of the 1940s when the maples spread
over the oiled dirt roads, and red roses grew
higher and higher at the house of the blue-haired widow.

Crows and Windmills

Crows and windmills—sounds of American farmland
When the sky is overcast and the wind blows at evening,

As someone like Burchfield would know, taking down his easel
In the Depression, and starting the long stroll back

Through a meadow of swaying bunchgrass to the county road
Where his running board Ford is waiting tiredly

Pulled to the side, and gray as weathered clapboard
Of houses that seem to exist only in distance.

Tonight, I heard them again, but it was in a movie
And only for some minutes while a girl in overalls

Walked with her head down from her drunken father
Toward a hill and a tree like a clawed hand toppling over

Against the October sky. I shivered. The windmill's blades
Blurred in a wooden cluttering; the crows made dives

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Toward the open silo, cawing and cawing with that
Raw scratch of the throat that makes me think *O, Sinner-Man,*

Where you gonna run to? Such heavy loneliness
Came over me I had to grip the next row's empty seatback

Until the scene was done. I had been returned
To Roark's farm, and had heard a third sound: the dry

Snap and whisper of thousands of rows of cornstalks
A gang of us were playing in, losing ourselves on purpose,

Then leaping high as we could to see above them, calling
Our names out: a parody of what would become our lives,

Moon bleeding, stars falling, sea sinking, rocks rolling,
All on that day. As a joke, my friends snuck off, and I

Was left leaping and calling to no one when the dusk
Came on. Desperate, I leaped and called and leaped and called

Among the cornstalks until, exhausted, I fell
And rolled over, panting; in the overcast, I saw

A flock of crows, the pattern so jagged it was almost vicious.
Each crow, as the flock passed above me, cawed out its warning

More to itself than others; and when, at last, I followed
The windmill sound, it became a huge gray daisy

Whirring above the barn. . . . Farmer Roark found me
And drove me home in a red truck splattered with rust

When I couldn't stop crying and shaking. My parents
Had not known I was gone, worked to the bone as they were.

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JANE MAYHALL

What's New in Appalachia

Tomatoes sunning by the window, three dulcimers
on the walls carved by the owner, who is also
a mountain teacher, dishes piled on the stove
ready to use; and books, above all, the books,
crowding over chairs and haphazard on the bed.
There is a soft light in the cabin; this is a
true log dwelling only slightly winterized, plants
poking through a hole, and the wide plank floors
tilt sideways at the hillside. But above all are
the books, the only belongings, nearly, not dusty,
so caused by constant reading: Shakespeare, Dante,
Milosz, Keats and Auden, strewn across the bed.
The steam of the pot looks violet from the setting
trees in the sun, buckeye, maple and a shaggy sort
of twisted vine nobody can think the name of. Our
host, as I said, a teacher, is cooking beans and onions
he canned for Christmas; pours water from a copper dipper,
to add to many a good quaff, from halls of bourbon.

Wyoming Stop-off

Steak and whisky, was there an ever more
luxurious fare, laid out on bare table?
and the lavatory for both men and women,
in a boxed annex, hung with beaded curtain,
concise as hawk wing, the "Eating Place" in
a perfect appointment, all strong functions
evident. The bar was my favorite, a shabby

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railroad green, and three men in ten gallon
hats, drinking with a quiet that no non-drinker
could attain. Travellers, myself and boyfriend,
sat in a perfect, selfless, physical health, feeling
the Wild West enter at our vest pocket, into hearts.
At a dust-coated window, there was a big, corny
electric diamond, casting amusement on our heads;
and a juke box, out of style, played the old slot-
machine promise that, twenty years later, its motley
imitators canned for the music industry audience.

Florida, 1984

Phenomena of light and fog, the whole sky was a
rainbow; blond or coffee-colored children, fishermen,
everybody with pink heightened faces and in glowing clothes,
leaned off the crimson causeway, fated the next moment to
turn gold. The vaporous, burning water as in a purple bowl.
You could almost smell, not a salt atmosphere, but
sandalwood, incense off the coast, where the blue, smoky
inlets took in the Gulf. Not to illustrate or make the driving
easier, reflections came together—postcard realities,
umbered, two-lane. Before, abrupt, the dark.

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RICHARD GROSSMAN

The Larval War

G. Vanderbraak wishes to construct an aluminum cloud placed where one bomb would drown much of the population of four countries.

The sun goes down
and the mushroom cloud
that had been fashioned as a weapon
in the arts
still hangs upward from its floats
over the North Sea.

The aluminum message, shining
in toward the sea arm of Vlissingen,
this conception of the larval war
rocks in the purple light,
a flattened head. We imagine the eyes.

It cannot crowd us, and it cannot move us.
It can only be there as art.
The message is the same message
we derived once from certain painted flags
of the fifties.

The head wavers and nods in the distance.
The radiation of the sun strikes its surfaces from the side,
scattering light toward the shore.
The light we see.

(Maybe it is a Trojan horse
filled with enemy limbs.

Perhaps it is precipitating the bodies

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of those who concurrently labor in its view.)

The message of this made cloud
is centered in a much larger harbor as if the dark sky
behind it were a wallpaper,
a paper that recedes backwards and creates history,

this history of a different cloud.

And so it is with projects in the larval wars:
what is prepared for us is lost
as if there were such a thing as intimate disposal.

The cloud bobs and has more to say.
It states quite clearly
that there is no stress to its shape:
it refuses to blow apart. And won't rust.

It is like an ugly thing that won't topple.
The sea keeps it up. Many of us are willing to go out
and touch it. The proud burghers fought it
as if a sibyl came to them on wings made from their plates.
Somebody wrote on the back of it.

The message is slowly being erased by
the incoming waves.

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HILARY DAVIES

Elmstead Woods Station

The trains move in and out through the dusk's blue sweat,
Single-minded rockets springing from the tunnel,
Screaming as matter dies into a black hole:
The other side might lie suburbia
Or Andromeda. Commuters sway along the platform
At each trajectory, as if hoping at least once
For the encounter that would show how all heaven cart-
wheels
And the constellations burst.

You can come here at midday
And find a silence no true moorland ever has:
The awnings seem to hanker for a cherry orchard
And between projectiles nothing breathes,
Tight concentrated on the nerve links
Chirruping in the sun.

You think, some El Dorado?
Where stones are priceless fossils and the inhabitants
Are foxcubs forever tumbling in the grass?
But then we need an explanation for the rivers
Of glass and wheels erupting and men who come
From somewhere beyond the mountain;
At the edge of the realm the pit lies open, inviting.

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KRISTOPHER JOHNSON

Boat Made of Water

Late summer nights we'd scale the
cyclone fence and dive in the public
pool, the light beneath the springboard
undulating and dissolving like a
submarine moon.

We became Shapes, gliding and frogging
in the pale green water luminously pleated
against the tiles. Faces, torsos jack–
knifed, hoarding air to tunnel toward
the drain where potato bugs unwrinkled—

Clawing up through thick bubbles back
into the warm air that smelled of chlorine
and the trampled weeds in the field that
bleed milk when you squeeze them. Night
after night we swam in each other's bodies.

Then waded single-file out of the shallow
end and lay on the cement, phosphorescent,
panting—until the silhouette prints of our
wet skin diminished to single drying points.
The bellies of jets blinked overhead.

Sirens sounded across town, but not for us,
not for me. My friends gone, the light
extinguished—I'd float on my back in the
black water listening to my heart, my breath,
the breathing of distant swimmers.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Carabosse in a Cocktail Dress

THE PLOT OF THE CLASSICAL BALLET *Sleeping Beauty* turns on a serious social error: Carabosse the wicked fairy has not been sent an invitation to Aurora's christening. She swoops down on the party and puts a curse on the infant princess as a vindictive present. Someone reported during the fall influx of German modern dance at Brooklyn Academy that when Pina Bausch took over at the Wuppertal Opera House, outraged fans called her the Wicked Fairy of Ballet. I can see why. Bausch must have looked like an uninvited guest in the domain of bourgeois traditionalism, especially in the early seventies, when the German dance had exorcised the subversive pre-war influences of Jooss, Wigman, Laban, Schlemmer and other native experimenters, and was industriously working its way back to the smug niceties of the grand style. It seems extraordinary, though, to hear the Bauschvolk hailed as politically and aesthetically advanced in 1985 New York.

Bausch has installed the "poor theater" in the opera house, with all the contradictions that implies. She makes spectacle out of mess, craft out of the raw materials of craftsmanship. She makes neurotic behavior a stellar attraction. She herself, the diva of the entourage, is a gaunt, elusive presence, usually pictured with downcast eyes or quoted in withdrawn statements about how alienated she is from her own history. In her underlying attitudes and techniques, Bausch is replaying themes we've seen often over the past thirty years. But in the age of retro, cannibalizing the past while simultaneously denying it any authority has become standard practice.

Bausch began her three-week season at BAM with a cliché. With curtain up and all the stage's masking equipment flown out, the dancers get ready on a bare stage, exposing their bathrobes, nasal sprays, false eyelashes, warmups and superstitions to the gaze of the entering audience. This hackneyed device has been used by everyone from Maurice Bejart to Merce Cunningham. The only thing different about it in Bausch's *Arien* is that while the dancers do their thing a stagehand is watering the floor with a large hose. By the time the piece actually starts, the dancing space is ankle-deep in water. For the duration of the piece the flood remains, encumbering and endangering every action, and the dancers behave as if it weren't there. *Arien* is about seduction, and frequently about the trappings of seduction—clothes, makeup, dinner parties. But though their preparations are obsessive, once caught up in the heat

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of pursuit, the players' finery gets soaked, makeup smeared, hair bedraggled. Later they take off whatever clothes they have left and wallow in the water, recalling the Dionysiac revels of the sixties, when people tried to bring the theater back to primal awareness and sensitivity by slathering themselves with water, mud, paint, and every form of clutter.

But no one in those days had the nerve, or the money, to liberate instinctual play on such a tremendous scale. Perhaps Bausch's most impressive contribution is her development of these gigantic, irrelevant mises en scène which completely overtake the production. Sometimes they simply form existential obstacles for the dancers; in *Arien* the surreal quality of the stage-lagoon is emphasized by a realistic hippopotamus that heaves on and off the scene periodically. In other pieces, they suffuse the whole stage with atmosphere, like bizarre movie sets, impressing their tone on the events inside them. *Kontakthof* takes place in a grimy old meeting hall with a stage at one end that's never used, the perfect scene for a high school dance worse than any adolescent could imagine.

I think one reason Bausch evokes so many responses and memories in her audience is that her works are action-based and essentially formless. With no plots, progressions, developments or denouements, they beg to be interpreted. They are structured by stringing together various games and activities, in themselves unrelated. Each unit has its own gambit to be worked out.

In *Arien* the women sit in chairs lined up along the footlights. Each man has a woman to work on. Over some unstated period of time, the men run in and out with makeup, costumes, tiaras, overshoes. They dress and paint their mannequins as fast and as outlandishly as they can. The women neither respond nor resist. In *Kontakthof* all the dancers line up at the footlights and begin talking at once in several different languages. One man goes along the line, shoving a microphone in front of each in turn, so that the audience hears a snatch of each story but none in its entirety. In *The Seven Deadly Sins* Anna I slumps in a chair, looking sort of like Whistler's Mother, and one by one the men, dressed in bras and tight skirts, come up and hit her with karate chops. In *Sins* a woman stands passively while a man jams a tape measure around her chest, across her waist, up her leg into her crotch. When he's finished yelling out the statistics, he screws her front and back, grinding his hips against her as if he were drilling for oil. In *Kontakthof* a woman says the word Darling over and over into a microphone with different inflections from a husky endearment to a scream.

This isn't really dancing and it certainly isn't choreography, but it's physical beyond anything dancers ever have to do. The performer must be totally present and totally willing to go as far as the task demands. What makes this different from the sixties theater of Grotowski, Schechner, Schneemann and Halprin is that Bausch's

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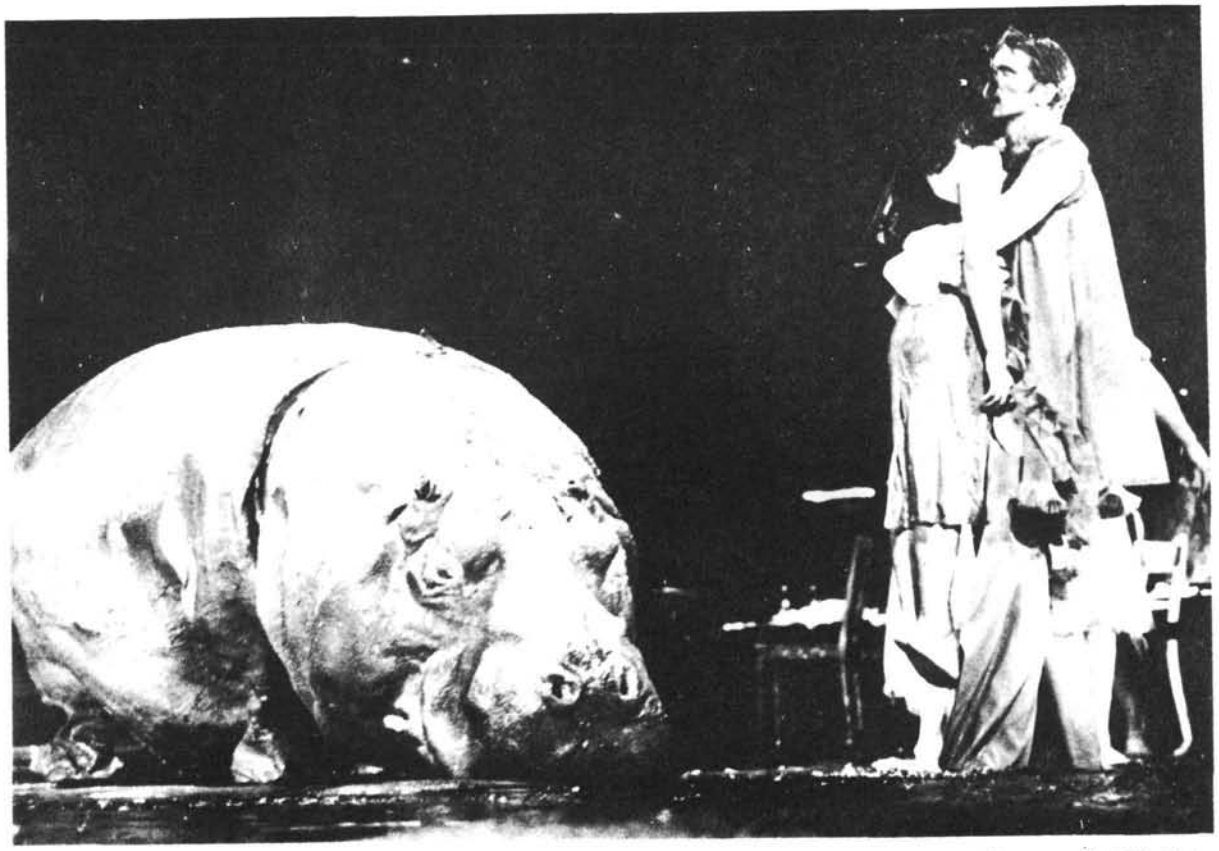

Beatrice Libonati and Lutz Förster in Pina Bausch's "Arien"

Photo credit: Ulli Weiss

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performers often have to pretend. They mime sexiness, embarrassment, sadomasochistic excitation, lobotomized submissiveness. They do it to arouse the audience, and their physicality is not only directed outward but depersonalized by the collective, cumulative circumstances in which they employ it. You don't care for them as characters, you react to what they're going through.

They inhabit their various dank, desolate environments as if they have no particular desire to be there, and don't care for the company. They occupy themselves exclusively with sexual games, whose rules may differ slightly according to the condition of the floor, the clothes they're made to wear, their state of exhaustion through the long evening, but whose outcome is always humiliation and failure to connect. At best, the victors may gain some kind of perverse satisfaction, but it always seems to be at someone else's expense. Pina Bausch says she is concerned with love and human relations; the only human concerns I saw on her stage were self-loathing, fear and anxiety, cruelty, and a misanthropic glee at coaxing another person into one's power. Some viewers debated whether this was a pro- or anti-feminist message. The pros, I guess, think the advertisement of negative images constitutes an argument against them, while the antis consider the whole enterprise pornographic exploitation of women. I couldn't see Bausch in either political context. She isn't pro anything, except the dramatization of sexual despair.

The choreographer Pina Bausch most resembles is neither Rudolf Laban, the founder of German modern dance and progenitor of the catchall genre dance expressionism; nor Kurt Jooss, whose Folkwang Schule in Essen provided her first training and later her first choreographing platform; nor Antony Tudor, the one influence she consistently acknowledges, with whom she studied for a year at the Juilliard School. It's an American maverick who's always been disdained by the literati and admired by devotees of "serious" dance, Anna Sokolow.

Now 71, Sokolow was at her peak in the fifties and sixties, the first of the American modern dancers to use "everyday movement" as a primary source of choreographic material. Dispensing with both the balletic and modern dance vocabularies of her time, Sokolow started with the body's basic motivations and energies. Instead of containing and conventionalizing natural movement so that it could be used in abstract dance patterns, she exaggerated the gesture's shape and force, often in cyclical or cumulative ways. She might take a wave of the hand, asking the dancer to increase its size and emphasize its rhythm until the arm pulled the whole body into a turn or a violent fall. A Sokolow dance is a series of escalating and subsiding shocks powered by the ongoing, repetitive drive of constant motor activity, a direct expression of feeling carried to an extreme and displayed as the sole subject matter. The viewer has no way to keep her or his distance from Sokolow's dance because it

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remains so close to ordinary experience even when it intensifies into physical mayhem. Her dances are usually dark—resigned or joylessly animated—and audiences, even friendly ones, find them hard to take.

I can't discover any evidence that Bausch studied with Sokolow during her two years in New York (1959–61), although one of Sokolow's most impressive dances, *Dreams*, had its premiere in May 1961 at the 92nd Street YMHA. However, Bausch did dance for a time with Sokolow's direct descendant, Paul Sanasardo, who works the same way with movement, only in a slightly more theatricalized and symbolic context. Neither Sokolow nor Sanasardo ever had the machinery necessary to do extensive touring in Europe, which may explain why the German critics view Bausch as a phenomenon. Here's what Norbert Servos claims for her in his recent, reverential book (*Pina Bausch Wuppertal Dance Theater or The Art of Training a Goldfish*, Cologne, 1984): ". . . she broadened the concept of dance, releasing the term 'choreography' from its narrower definition as a series of connected movements. . . . Dance theater developed into something one could define as 'theater of experience', a theater that by means of direct confrontation made reality, communicated in an aesthetic form, tangible as a physical reality."

What Bausch really has done is take a concert form and transfer it to the opera house stage. This can have dramatic results, especially when the original idea was deliberately anti-spectacular and anti-establishment. Americans have seen this metamorphosis repeatedly as the heroes of the counterculture became the darlings of the Tuesday night subscription crowd: Twyla Tharp, David Gordon, Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, the list is long. But in Germany they haven't ever had a dance counterculture; Bausch looks revolutionary. Besides, she has refused to adapt her methods for conventional opera house situations. The American postmoderns have permitted themselves to see their capitulation to the establishment as a challenge—they've tried to make things for the well-trained members of ballet companies even while preserving the anti-balletic orneriness of their original styles. I can't imagine the dancers in Hamburg or Munich doing anything of Pina Bausch's, though surely there's an impresario somewhere trying to figure out how to do it right this minute.

In a sense, that would be the obvious thing to do. As shown in Brooklyn by two Bausch alumnae, her aesthetic travels well. Appropriated by a glamorous, gifted solo performer, Mechthild Grossmann, the Bausch trademarks—the fascination with costume as a way of transforming the actor's persona and gender, the absorption in the physical act pressed to the point of violence, the need to show women in degrading circumstances, the accumulation of objects that become stage litter when they're no longer needed, the eclectic and nonlinear choice of music, verbal text, visual refer-

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ence—give color and theatricality to what is essentially a cabaret act. In *Wo Meine Sonne Scheint* Grossmann sings, dances, does monologues, masturbates, rages, turns herself into a child, a debutante, a businessman, a drunken jock, a man-hating female, indicting them all as vain and selfish while making them all curiously attractive. Reinhild Hoffmann's cast of characters—played by twenty dancers in her theater piece *Callas*—are equally repulsive and gorgeous, but her whole approach is much more formal. Hoffmann's stage is carefully controlled and beautifully designed at all times—even the duets with the whips are choreographed.

Pina Bausch makes none of these concessions. Her theater is gargantuan, unwieldy. When something ugly happens, it's never made sympathetic by the performers' personal vulnerability; they're all hardened predators. The costumes are unbecoming, long out of style, and worn without grace. People do things in individual ways but each one's voice is cancelled out by a dozen others clamoring for attention. Cruelty is never gratuitous—it's a ritual, sanctioned and prepared for by the group, undergone by all in turn, suffered without pardon or redemption. It's not that I want to be shielded from the meanness Bausch says is in the world. It's that by putting it where it comes forth magnified, glorified, and officially promoted, she elevates it. She says evil *is* the world, and she wants us to enjoy it. The week after she left town, I felt some kind of hex had been lifted.

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JILL DOLAN

Seeing and Being Seen: The Avant-garde and Other Egotists

PERFORMANCE IN NEW YORK THESE DAYS is not just what happens on stage and how people in the audience respond. Most of it, in fact, happens before the show and at intermission. In the drafty stairwell that precedes La Mama's Annex, people watch the line grow behind them, waiting to see "the Kantor." They talk, without too much gauche excitement, about when they'll be off to Brooklyn to see "the Wilson," or "the Foreman." And by the end of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, the BAM lobby is already buzzing with plans to see "the Shepard" in Manhattan.

Such a full schedule of fashionable events blends the performances together. Tadeusz Kantor's political expressionism has the same impact as Robert Wilson's empty formalism, and people are, for the most part, just as indifferent to Richard Foreman's postmodern misogyny as to Sam Shepard's more traditional variety.

Among the crowds in the lobby at BAM, where spectators scurry about smoking and planning when to walk out, you wonder what the purpose of performance has become. Has the ritual of communication in a communal space—however faulty its basis now seems—been reduced to seeing and being seen in the lobby or the aisles? Has how long you last at a performance become more important than what that performance means?

People seem blithely unconcerned with the meanings motivating these big events. The daily press critics are anxious to see redeeming political implications where there are none—as in Wilson's *The Golden Windows*—and to make myths out of mockery—as in Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind*. Encouraged by reviews, people enthusiastically attend reactionary formalist work generated by Americans, after attending Kantor's vehemently political—but Polish—work just as eagerly.

At La Mama, Tadeusz Kantor and the Theatru Cricot 2 created stark images of Poland's political tyranny in *Let the Artist Die*. Visually and thematically, the piece resembles *Wielopole, Wielopole*, the last Kantor piece imported to New York. Performers with pasty white faces and a broad, physical style are put through repeated scenes of torture and pogrom by performers who play the Polish military. Archetypes of Polish life—the doctor, prostitute, soldier, virgin—are locked in primitive instruments of torture then freed, only to be

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loaded into box cars and sent to concentration camps. The anti-fascist message is inescapably—almost didactically—clear.

Kantor sits on a chair to the left of the space, orchestrating the militaristic music by gesturing passionately to the sound booth. Sometimes, he indicates that the music should swell to a fearful crescendo. Other times, he pats the air, puts his finger to his lips, and the music fades. Like a disrobed Bunraku operator, he modulates the performers the same way.

The gnome-like man, dressed all in black, is impassive as he directs the expression of his history. He cannot spare the emotion the American spectators lavish indiscriminately on his work. Something in the ovation seems thankful to have experienced vicariously the righteous indignation of the politically oppressed, thankful to be relieved from thinking too seriously about oppression experienced or perpetrated here. Would the same audience have responded as enthusiastically to such a pointedly political display if the theme were American racism, sexism, or imperialism? The San Francisco Mime Troupe's American political theatre doesn't play at La Mama when it tours through New York, and crowds at its performances are smaller.

At BAM, people rubbed shoulders with a self-congratulatory air of being in the right place seeing exactly the right work. What could be more chic than a Robert Wilson production after *the CIVIL warS*, his *cause célèbre*, was cancelled from the Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival in 1984 because of its extravagant expense and impossible logistics? It didn't matter that Wilson's work is transcended by his ego, or that *The Golden Windows* was ultimately too boring to sit through. Being there was most important.

Wilson's "chamber work" is based on a children's story, the plot of which has little to do with the images he constructs. The raked stage is formed like a hill; its apex shifts from one side of the stage to another between acts. This dark mound—the whole piece takes place at night—is topped by a sentry box as narrow as a coffin that opens and closes mysteriously, letting out brilliant white light.

Wilson has to be credited for his images. A performer (Charles Whiteside or John Bowman) dressed totally in black, hangs from the flies with a noose around his neck for most of the performance. The deep blue background recreates the movement of stars, comets, and falling meteorites against the night sky. A glass of liquid set at the front of the stage glows with, perhaps, radioactivity. A woman (Cynthia Babak or Kimberly Farr) floats above and behind the stage like an apparition. She steps out of the folds of her flowing dress, which remains seated in her shape as she stands naked in the nothingness.

The eerie images are beautiful, but the politics of the piece are questionable. David Warrilow, using the careful diction he might in a Beckett play, narrates most of the aggressively nonsensical text. The words are all easy non sequiturs, seldom amusing, combined

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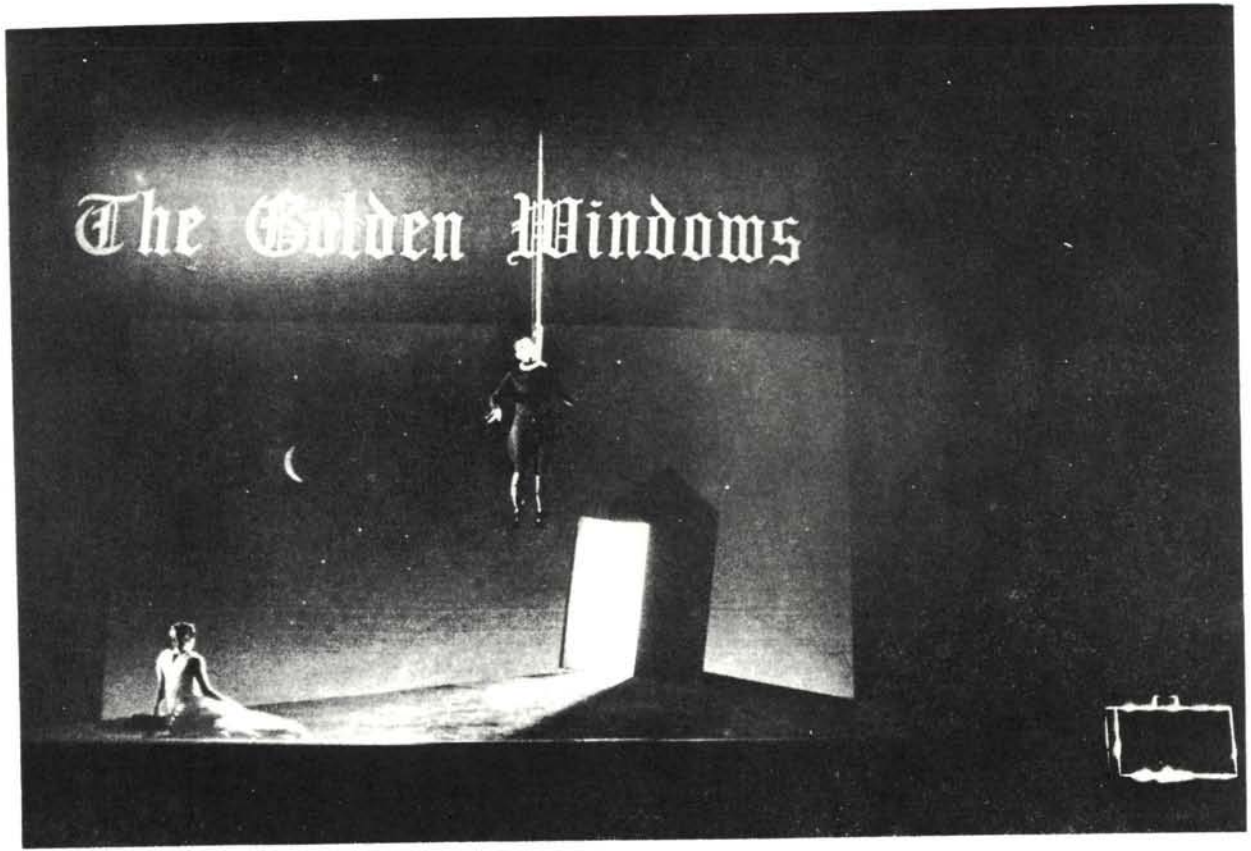

Cynthia Babak and Charles Whiteside in "The Golden Windows"

Photo credit: Johan Elbers

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with trite sentiment and equally trite doomsaying. When the earthquake—or bomb—hits halfway through *The Golden Windows*, the stage separates in a zig-zag pattern from which smoke pours, and the flooring rips as though from apocalyptic pressure. The image doesn't seem to forebode the end of the world so much as the depths of Wilson's pockets. In the midst of such costly spectacle, the gesture toward apocalyptic metaphysics is paltry and forced.

Richard Foreman, another avant-garde director who conducted formalist experiments with his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre work in the mid-seventies, has also recently tried to fit into ill-suited ideological clothes. Last summer's *Miss Universal Happiness* at the Performing Garage, and *The Birth of the Poet*, his offering at BAM, are both empty attempts to caulk his formalist structures with leftist ideology. *Birth of the Poet*, with a text by Kathy Acker, chatters on about workers and productivity and nuclear energy. The performers maneuver golf carts around the space, and move about manically amongst huge set pieces that Foreman admits have nothing to do with the production.

Foreman's signature devices are missing, perhaps as a concession to his collaborators Acker, musician Peter Gordon, and artist David Salle. There are no strings across the stage, and his usually witty, ironic texts are replaced by Acker's pornography—too many dirty words shouted through mikes worn like headsets.

Foreman's trademark—shining bright lights in spectators' eyes to obscure their view—is meaningless in *Birth of the Poet*, as little happens on stage to see. The space looks empty, despite designer Salle's unusual images—gigantic two-dimensional ears of corn, a full-stage human body made of steel tubing and purple cloth, a giant steel hand that becomes a cage, and a giant steel vagina also eager to ensnare victims, as well as expressionistic painted backdrops of a man's head, a dog's head, and a woman bent over at the waist peering through her legs at the audience.

Meanwhile, back in Manhattan, Sam Shepard was working at the Promenade Theatre. Hailed as the most important contemporary American playwright, Shepard writes plays that are called "mythic" representations of the American family. *Lie of the Mind* is in fact based on a myth—the one that dictates women should put up with abusive husbands, and that wife-beating and love-hate relationships still make romantic dramas.

In Shepard's latest myth, Jake (Harvey Keitel) has, not for the first time, beaten his wife for alleged infidelity. But this time, Beth (Amanda Plummer) has taken such a beating she's suffered brain damage. While her brother (Will Patton) nurses her back to speech, memory, and life, Jake falls into a terrible depression. His brother (Aidan Quinn) hauls him back to the family homestead, where his mother (Geraldine Page) is supposed to care for him. While Beth begins to regain her memory, and with it, her persistent love for

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Jake, Jake lies immobilized in his childhood bed playing with his father's ashes and thinking that Beth, too, is dead.

A Lie of the Mind is not about the American family as such. It is about fathers and sons, and the destruction they wreak in the name of their own machismo. If Shepard were willing to criticize his obsession with virility, maybe his work would transcend the self-indulgent mire into which it sinks with *Lie of the Mind.*

On the monotone, minimal set, the play's two families live on two platforms separated by a narrow alley. For over four hours, the play rambles along at a deadly pace. The cast wanders about with no discernible direction (for which Shepard is credited), delivering redundant, flat dialogue and one-dimensional stock performances. Keitel is mean, Plummer incoherent, and Page rather batty. No one seems sure whether he is in a comedy or a surreal tragedy.

After the second act, three hours into the play, people began consulting their watches and debating whether they had time to stay for the rest. Without undue indecision, the women beside me picked up their fur coats and squeezed past. But the press has turned this saddle-sore cowboy into an American myth. Even if you leave after the first intermission, *Lie of the Mind* is an event—after all, a Shepard play is a place to be seen.

ROBERT LEITER

The Iceman Cometh

THERE MAY NEVER BE A CONSENSUS on Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh.* Its partisans are legion. And yet a small band of detractors persists in pointing out that the play is too long, too schematic, too repetitious to qualify as a masterpiece. The irony of the situation is that many of the play's staunchest admirers would agree with this argument up to a point, but would add that without these defects the play might lose much of its power, might not be *The Iceman Cometh* at all.

The reviews that greeted Jose Quintero's recent revival of the work at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre were predictable: much de-

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served praise, a few damning notices, and no critical middle ground whatsoever. But despite the lack of critical accord, one would have expected the American theatergoing public to keep a production as superlative as Quintero's alive for at least a season. As it turned out, *Iceman* closed in December after a run of only two months.

The play is set in New York during the summer of 1912. A dozen down-and-out characters sit in Harry Hope's dingy saloon—variously described as the Bedrock Bar, the End of the Line Cafe, the Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller—awaiting the appearance of Theodore Hickman, a salesman who is always good for a few laughs and a round of drinks.

But when Hickey arrives late in Act I, he is a changed man, no longer dependent on the booze, and bent on saving his friends, on bringing them the peace he himself has recently achieved. Each of the characters in *Iceman* has a pipe dream, an illusion he clings to in order to make life bearable: Harry, who hasn't set foot out of his bar since his wife's death twenty years earlier, believes he will one day take a walk around the neighborhood, get reacquainted with old friends and run for political office; Jimmy Tomorrow insists that he will get his old newspaper job back; Willie Oban plans to go to the D.A.'s office and at last begin practicing law.

Hickey's goal is to force his friends to relinquish their illusions, to face the truth and be free. But in the end, he proves to be a false messiah; his plans for peace lead only to despair.

Quintero took great risks in this production, especially in Act I when the pace was dangerously slow and the characters barely moved except to raise their heads and speak. But Quintero solved the problem of inaction by enlisting actors whose voices were so distinctive, so rich in timbre that the speeches took on the quality of arias. Without straining for effect, Harry Hope's birthday celebration in Act II was both a realistic depiction and, as O'Neill had wished, the Last Supper, with all the religious motifs in place. Much of the credit must go to Ben Edwards' set, as stark and cheerless as a Hopper painting, and Thomas R. Skelton's lighting, which threw eery shadows across the stage.

The performance faltered only in Act III, but the problem lies more in the play than in the production. It is here that Hickey quite literally pushes his friends out into the world. Yet what we see beyond the doors of Harry Hope's bar is not the harsh sunlight of a summer's day, but rather an unimaginative depiction of a street scene, a designer's *conception* of reality. Till that moment, Quintero and his technicians had convinced us that the bar we were seeing was really a bar; now it was reduced to nothing more than a stage set. In the process, the play's message lost a measure of its impact. Matters were quickly righted in Act IV, but Quintero might have solved the problem by being less traditional in his approach.

The cast, on all but one or two counts, was exemplary. Donald

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Moffat, as Larry Slade, the old "grandstand foolosopher," had the properly rugged physique and grizzled mien of a one-time anarchist, now disillusioned with the Cause. His regal bearing added a dimension of dignity to the character that I had not known was there before. Barnard Hughes, as Harry Hope, has played comic Irishmen many times before, most notably in Hugh Leonard's *Da*, but in *Iceman* he never took the easy way out, never once fell into clichéd line readings or fussy stage business.

Jason Robards played Hickey, the role that made him famous (also under Quintero's direction) nearly thirty years ago in the landmark Circle in the Square production. Something totally understandable happened to his conception of the character. He wasn't quite able to pull off the jaunty salesman repartee. He seemed too slow, his responses dulled; and his affectations—clapping his hands to underscore a point, snapping his fingers at the end of certain lines in his long fourth act monologue—were tricks of the actor's trade.

But where age may have robbed Robards' characterization of a layer of verisimilitude, it added depth to the tragic dimensions of the part. Often the actor's face resembled a death mask. And when he recited lines like, "I've had hell inside me. I can spot it in others," his authenticity was chilling. Perhaps the supreme compliment I can pay him is that when I read the play weeks later, I heard his voice coming through Hickey's dialogue.

The production's finest moment, however, occurred in the final scene. Don Parritt, a renegade from the anarchist movement, has betrayed a group of comrades, including his own mother. Larry insists that the only honorable thing is for the boy to kill himself. Parritt does at last jump from the bar's fire escape. When the body hit the ground at the Lunt-Fontanne, the impact resounded throughout the theater. It was realism of the highest order. The floor shook beneath my feet and, like Larry Slade, I felt the fear of death pass through me.

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GEORGE KEARNS

Revolutionary Women and Others

REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN AS REVOLUTIONARIES GO BACK at least to Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* and, in verse, to Yeats's problems in coming to terms with Maude Gonne teaching "ignorant men most violent ways." As contemporary fiction attempts to follow or to sum up the history of the last two decades—perhaps we should say, as fiction turns experience into history—women increasingly appear at or near the center of extremist or terrorist politics, and they are no longer, as in Conrad, confined to the role of spiritualized (and usually used and abused) handmaidens of male revolution or protest. They make bombs and employ them, and can be portrayed as determined theorists and activists, often as Lady Macbeths driving on their weak and wavering menfolk. (The precursor of woman–as–activist, working independently of temporizing or trembling male power, is Judith. What a Philistine writer might have made of Delilah we will never know: she has no politics in *Judges*, where she is only a mercenary, nor in Milton, where she is an emblem—what did you expect?—of female inconstancy and self-centeredness.)

Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* is a taut and brilliant portrayal of a variety of radical and terrorist women at work in present-day Britain, acting out of varying degrees of muddle and purpose, madness and sanity.[1] Here there is no trace of the psychologizing and heady mysticism of Lessing's earlier fiction, but an artist in command of mature powers, her eye and ear never distracted from her subject. The prose is under absolute control, its surface austerity masking a suppleness as Lessing observes with and for the characters, and moves in and out of their voices. The observation is merciless in its pathos, and can be compassionate and comic, but only until it reaches a limit of horror—when the bombs go off and the games cease to be fun. Lessing's central figures, Alice and her comrades in a self-invented splinter-group, the Communist Centre Union, become, in the course of this tale, belatedly aware of the professionals who are not playing games or adopting a "lifestyle," and are frighteningly attracted to them. The limitation of the CCU comrades, however, is their refusal to see themselves as what Lenin called "useful idiots," players whom the professional revolutionaries

[1] THE GOOD TERRORIST, by *Doris Lessing*. Knopf. $16.95.

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will never take into their confidence, but whom they will use and sacrifice for their ends.

The title, *The Good Terrorist*, is or is not an oxymoron depending upon your point of view; it hovers above the novel with an irony only fully to be grasped on the last page. For the first two-thirds of the book we assume that the good terrorist, if *malgré lui*, is Alice Mellings, blessed with a Dickensian "good heart," unassailably self–sacrificing, unshakable in her desire to mother, to help out anyone in need of whatever she can give. She is thirty-six and has been on the underground barricades half her life. We are always surprised when the narrative reminds us of her age, for Alice talks and thinks like someone in, at best, her early twenties. That is one of Lessing's points: Alice is old enough to have moved beyond the hazy rhetoric and uninformed, unthought-through ideology which has become a habit, a "going on with it." She is the daughter of divorced middle-class parents, rebelling against the way of life to which she has been raised. The scenes with her parents and their friends are searing and shot through with what must be, for many readers of Alice's generation, to say nothing of their parents, an embarrassing accuracy. "You'll see, you shitty old fascist," she shrieks at her mother, at what may be their final parting. "Everything is *rotten*. It's all *undermined*. We are going to pull it all *down*." In fact, Alice shines with middle-class values of decency, fair play, cleanliness and domestic order, which she attempts, in an uphill struggle, to translate into the terms of a ragtag revolutionary commune living in a "negotiated squat," an abandoned middle-class house which Alice, with Herculean determination, restores to something like its original solidity and comforts. Among Lessing's sharpest comic observations is Alice's ability to draw upon class manners and speech patterns as a tactic for dealing with the police and the welfare state within whose regulations and upon whose handouts the commune exists. At a dangerous moment, Alice finds herself confronting a very threatening professional who may or may not be KGB or IRA. She falls back easily on a familiar class tactic and voice: "I'm not interested in America or Czechoslovakia or Russia. . . . None of us are. We are English revolutionaries and we shall make our own policies and act according to the English tradition. Our own tradition."

Yet if Alice is "good," and a terrorist, she is rotten at *being* a terrorist, as are her not-so-kindhearted comrades, including Jasper, the boyfriend to whom she is devoted even though his sexual interests run in a different line. Lessing sketches Jasper and his buddy, Bert, with Dostoyevskian acid: self-appointed revolutionary "theorists" whose attempts to offer their services to the IRA and the Soviets get nowhere (the professionals know them), but whose sexist assumptions of leadership over the women comrades are classic. Perhaps the good terrorist is the humorless Jocelin who, in a parody of domestic competence, knows how to follow a kind of recipe

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book for making *bricolage* bombs and timing devices out of—well, mostly out of things you'd find around the house. It is Jocelin's single-mindedness that finally drives the male leaders beyond talk and into tragic action, from which Lessing builds pages of suspense that match or surpass the greatest popular masters of the suspense genres. In a world in which such events have become commonplace both in actuality and in fiction, Lessing has managed to frame the terrorism so that the reader still feels shock and moral outrage, perhaps because we watch so intimately the steps by which the game gets out of control of the players. The *really* good terrorists, however, are the professionals, shadowy men with false identities into which KGB, IRA, CIA and British Intelligence appear to merge. There is "Andrew," an intensely serious man who looks Russian, speaks with a perfected American accent, and goes under an Irish name. He is "the real thing," in Alice's starry eyes. "He was like Lenin!" Perhaps. Other men, and women too, in this world of "false voices" are tougher than Andrew.

Lessing's prose is without decoration, and what images and metaphors there are belong to the minds of the characters. She reserves direct comment until the last sentence, when with a masterful stroke she reveals her point of view and the whole novel clicks into place as something much more serious than another satire, however finely worked, on the confusions of sixties-generation radicals playing with fire. Alice is left alone in the house she has rebuilt with such love, a house that will soon fall back into decay. She has an appointment with a mysterious agent of impeccable English upper-crust name and speech, who may, it dawns upon her as she fantasizes about the meeting, *not* be KGB after all. She looks "like a nine-year-old girl who has had a bad dream," Lessing tells us, and then comes down with a damning and reverberating comment: "The poor baby sat waiting for it to be time to go out and meet the professionals." It is not only at Alice and her comrades that Lessing squints an unforgiving eye, but at all of us, perhaps, in our ways poor babies, pretending to political sense in a world manipulated by professionals whose false voices we can only interpret through the inadequate "news" that arrives via the media as romance and melodrama. *The Good Terrorist* sounds to me like one of the novels of our time that will remain, unless the professionals do their work too well, for other times to admire and find exciting.

In *The Nuclear Age* Tim O'Brien takes up, on American turf, some of the same themes and history treated by Lessing; the center of the novel is the story of a band of young revolutionaries working out of a commune in Key West.[2] We watch them age, up to 1995, when the story is being told, into increasing irrelevance and hypocrisy. It is a woman, Sarah, the narrator's off-and-on-love, who is the

[2]THE NUCLEAR AGE, by *Tim O'Brien*. Knopf. $16.95.

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driving force in moving her wimpy boyfriends from fairly peaceful campus protests during the Vietnam War to murky international activism, the nature of which remains clouded. The high point of her political life seems to have been getting her face on the cover of *Newsweek* in 1971. By 1985 she's "one of the last of the die-hard rads." If *The Good Terrorist* is a lesson in how to do it, *The Nuclear Age* is a lesson in caution. A class in creative writing could profit from the comparison, which might demonstrate that it's not enough to write about what sounds like your Own Experience in your Own Language, even when combined with a Major Theme. Many novels are flat, plain or overly-familiar in material, but few are as poorly conceived. O'Brien won the National Book Award for his Vietnam novel, *Going After Cacciato*, which I've not read. He's certainly not without talent: for a few pages, *The Nuclear Age* comes to life, and the writing is tight, but only when the subject is military action, as when the young activists undergo some rough basic training in Cuba. O'Brien has fallen into one of the traps of first-person narrative: if the speaker has no wit, no style, and only an average intelligence he's likely to yatter on in the everyday demotic we hope to escape from in books. The narrator, William Cowling, tells us everything at exactly the same pace, making each scene go on for pages after we've got the point. Cowling, I take it, is *supposed* to have an ordinary mind, but that doesn't help if everything we hear is filtered through it. His research, in preparation for telling the story of his generation as he pushes fifty, appears to have gone about as far as leafing through back numbers of *U.S. News and World Report*. Somehow the grim history of our time is remembered, but takes on the flavor of nostalgia edging toward trivia test. Hey, remember Mama *Cass*? What ever happened to CONELRAD? What year were they singing "If I Had a Hammer"? How about Abbie *Hoffman*! Lester *Maddox*, man!!!

By 1995, Cowling has left the die–hard rads, become a multi-millionaire by discovering rich deposits of uranium, and is living in Montana with his wife, a former airline stewardess, and their twelve-year-old daughter. He has so many millions that he's shared a lot of them with Sarah and her followers, still back in Key West doing their thing. Sarah can be a terrorist in a mink coat. But the *irony* is that Cowling is obsessed with the nuclear blowup he's sure is just around the corner, an apocalypse deriving from the very uranium that produces his wealth! So night and day, with time out to review his life and three decades of world history, he's digging a giant hole in the backyard, with the intention of getting himself and his family into it so that he can blow them up and bury them before the holocaust. This is not really the best way to avoid nuclear destruction. Luckily, that realization comes to Cowling in the nick of time, as he discovers, apparently a new thought for his forty-nine years, the dimly comforting faith that, in spite of the inevitability of nuclear war, somehow Man will Endure.

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My purpose in mentioning *The Nuclear Age* is hardly just to say that this is an unfortunate excursion by a celebrated writer. For there's undoubtedly something symptomatic here: an unfocused feeling that all the protest and activism of the sixties and seventies has achieved nothing; that the sixties generation has sold out to consumer culture, and that later generations don't care; that the world is closer than ever to doom; and that if we still have any impulse toward politics, we haven't the faintest idea where to direct it. That some such complex of thoughts is an ever-present temptation can't be denied. So, with a few drinks in us, we might indulge in the maudlin profundities of O'Brien's anti-hero, as he recalls his sixties comrades:

> What happened to them? All of us? I wonder about the consequences of our disillusion, the loss of energy, the slow hardening of a generation's arteries. What *happened*? Was it entropy? Genetic decay? Even the villains are gone. What became of Brezhnev and Nixon . . .?

But we have to do better than this. In fact the villains are not gone, or they're gone, perhaps, if we can imagine them, as O'Brien's narrator does, only as personalities made readily available for our self-congratulatory boos and hisses. The villainy today is complex and systematic, and a novel like *The Nuclear Age*, that appears to beg for support from my own anti-nuclear politics, strikes me as deeply offensive in its glibness. I would like to think that Tim O'Brien is sharper and smarter than William Cowling, but he hasn't composed a fiction that allows me to see how his analysis or point of view are very different.

Sheila Fugard's *A Revolutionary Woman* is, to risk what may sound an odd contradiction, a quiet, almost poetic work about violence.[3] Fugard seems determined to keep out of her writing any brilliance or cleverness that would distract us from observing the *agon* of South African racism or the troubled history behind it. The setting is a small town in the arid Karoo region in 1920, twenty years after the Boer War, two after the Bolshevik Revolution upon which the English heroine, Christina Ransome, now in her late thirties, places so much hope as a beacon leading to a better future. "You fail to understand," she says to the leader of the local Boers, with some naïveté in regard to the situation she is in. "This is a revolutionary age, and the ruling classes are finished. You can't ignore the Bolshevik Revolution. The Coloureds and Blacks will inherit Africa and history will prove me correct." "This is the twentieth century," she preaches to another of the Boer men who dominate the town (their women never appear in the novel), "and socialism is the driving force. The Boers must recognize this, otherwise they will fail,

[3] A REVOLUTIONARY WOMAN, by *Sheila Fugard*. George Braziller, Inc. $14.95.

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and that would be tragedy." Christina has the thoughts of Ruskin, Tolstoy, Shaw and Gandhi behind her, and her innocence is such that she almost expects the Boers to consider her arguments. They, of course, are totally unprepared to think of themselves as a "ruling class." Rather, they see themselves as oppressed by history, threatened by a foreign liberalism, and upholding a traditional way of life in which "God made the races separate" and has anointed them His surrogates, the "just masters."

Christina had been a follower of Gandhi during his years of struggle in South Africa, and had had an affair with another of Gandhi's followers, a handsome Brahmin who suddenly abandoned her for an Indian child bride. Memories of Gandhi fill her mind, and of Sanjay, her lover, and of her encounter with the child bride, who seems, to this Englishwoman trying to repress her own sexuality in behalf of a higher calling, to represent a debasing sensuality and socially retrograde custom. Her memories of her life with Gandhi are intense, as are her fantasies about India, and create vibrant mental landscapes that contrast with the dour, arid Karoo. She has come there to be the teacher in a Coloured school and has, as the novel begins, been dismissed from her post. Christina thinks it must be because of her association with Gandhi. In fact, the Boers are much simpler than that: they suspect her of sexual relations with her prize student, the handsome, fair–complexioned Ebrahim, who comes to her house each day for tutoring. The Boer men are not entirely wrong. Although consciously Christina likes to think of Ebrahim as a "son," it seems clear that she has a sexual attraction to him. Ebrahim certainly feels it's his right to have sex with his teacher and other white women. A sexual encounter between Ebrahim and the retarded daughter of a Boer family brings the cries of "rape" and the "decent" citizens turned into a posse or *kommando*. For an American, reading *A Revolutionary Woman* is like reading a familiar story translated into a foreign tongue.

Fugard attempts, not without a strain upon Christina's first-person narrative, yet not without power either, to raise the tale from tragedy in the sense of lamentable to tragedy on something like a Euripidean scale. She does this by allowing breaks in the realistic mode that dominates the novel, so that her characters, especially the Boer men, may come downstage to deliver stylized speeches pleading their history. She recognizes, too, the tangles of the racist-colonial situation; its resistance to self-righteous analysis and simple Enlightenment solutions; the refusal of the oppressed to adopt the culture, manners and morals of their white liberators; and the sexual crosscurrents that complicate the motives of oppressors, liberators and oppressed alike. There is at times some clumsy machinery that has to come into play for Fugard to dramatize all this through the voice of Christina, who is characterized as an isolated "progressive" woman of 1920, working from an eclectic idealist-socialist ideology

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which doesn't quite accommodate all of Fugard's thoughts. There is a glossary of Indian, Boer and South African words, which I seldom needed to refer to, but ignorance of South African history, of the Boer War and its aftermath, left me puzzled by some references.

Readers International, with editorial offices in London and a branch in Columbia, Louisiana (P.O. Box 959), is an admirable nonprofit venture with a special interest in publishing books banned or censored in their countries of origin. Its list includes works from China, Czechoslovakia and Soweto, as well as Sergio Ramírez's informative novel, rich in atmosphere, *To Bury Our Fathers*, portraying life in Somoza's Nicaragua. The latest Readers International publication is, necessarily, a mournful work, but extremely well-written and interesting, Linda Ty-Casper's *Awaiting Trespass*.[4] Ty-Casper is an experienced writer, as the reader can see at once from the quality of her prose, the author of two volumes of short stories and five other novels, all published in the Philippines or Hong Kong. The book bears the subtitle *A Pasión*, a traditional Filipino genre, a "lengthy, chanted chronicle of agonies." Ty-Casper writes from an insider's knowledge of her society's dominant class, the old, established families whose members may have varying relationships with the Marcos government, some prospering from it, some in opposition to it, but all sharing a clan gossip privileged to rumors from inner circles. Her story takes place during a three-day wake held by the Gil family, whose patriarch, Don Severino Gil, has died mysteriously, and whose body has been returned to them in a casket nailed shut. Three generations of this widely-extended family, gathered in the dead man's house in central Manila, pass the time, before, after and during the many masses and rosaries, talking. Women, for the most part, talk about jewelry and clothes, their children, food, and old times; men talk mostly about the government, their own diverse politics, or their business affairs, which in Marcosland can never be entirely distinct from the government's affairs. Three days' worth of talk allows us to piece together what appears an almost encyclopedic survey of the moral and political corruption of the Marcos era, of the particular texture and subtle dynamics that have held together what seems so overripe that it can only fall.

Ty-Casper's central figure is Don Severino's niece, Telly, an unusual, intelligent, middle-aging woman, who finds herself, not by conscious design, a lone and eccentric figure by the norms of Filipino society. Telly can only take short doses of the chatter of Filipino upper-crust women; she can't, nor really does she want to, enter the male world; her training and social position appear to have barred her from any useful work; and her attempts to make contact with

[4]AWAITING TRESPASS: (A PASIÓN), by *Linda Ty-Casper*. Readers International, Inc. $14.95; $7.95.

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the younger generation and to participate in a meeting protesting the imprisonment of writers all fizzle out. She is uncomfortable and awkward when she tries to leave her own world and move among the poor, too limited by the background of a woman of her generation to become in any sense a "revolutionary." At best, her eccentricity makes her a puzzling irritant to Filipino society. Her energies, with no place to go, turn inward, producing a dreamy world of memories of wanderings in Europe and of a suicide attempt in America. She is a poet, but her poems, which appear just to float through her mind as she floats through the world, are never written down and will never be published. The mind-poems are quite a brilliant invention of Linda Ty-Casper's, an objective correlative for Telly herself, intense, vague, unfinished, and with nowhere to go: "My thoughts move white / Among begonias / Rise to that brightly streaked hole in the sky / My days beat like a bird inside my heart / Multiply / Only the tips of their flying / Touch me."

In Telly, precisely because she fits in nowhere, Ty-Casper has devised a fine primary consciousness for *Awaiting Trespass*. Intelligent, observing, yet dreamily detached, Telly becomes a collecting point for information about the oppression, vulgarity, deracination and corruption that have turned contemporary Filipino history into a *pasión*. Don Severino's son, who has rebelled against his family by becoming a priest who ministers to the poor, is informed that he can have all the money he wants for his church if he will just name something after Imelda, the president's wife. The government prepares for a propaganda *coup* from the Pope's impending visit, while priests are everywhere involved in protest or in liberation theology among armed rebels in the countryside. The well-connected prosper from contracts in Saudi Arabia or Singapore, or, at home, from building plants the Japanese refuse to allow, as ecologically dangerous, in Japan. A Westinghouse nuclear facility that can't pass safety regulations in the U.S. is welcome in the Philippines, where it provides electricity for "export zones" free from taxes and laws. Manila has become the red-light district for Asia. Newspapers carry no news. The rich have Swiss bank accounts and try to live abroad as much as possible; at home their extravagant mansions are fitted out with gigantic Jacuzzis. The right connections are everything. People are murdered or simply "disappear," but it's impossible to know (as in the Aquino assassination) to what extent Marcos is aware of what's going on specifically, or whether he merely presides over a moral climate of lawlessness. And protest has been blunted by the wonderful semantics of insisting that the regime is *itself* a revolution, a "revolution from the top." As I write this, Marcos has just announced that he will run, again, for the presidency, denouncing his opponents as "corrupt, decadent and indecent." One does not have to read far in *Awaiting Trespass* to understand why he wouldn't want it published in the Philippines: it might hurt the campaign.

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In one sense, Carlos Fuentes' *The Old Gringo* takes place in the revolutionary Mexico of Pancho Villa; in another, in some symbolic contemporary state just south of the border, for it's loaded with obscure, heavy mutterings from which, I think, both Mexican and North American readers are supposed to take home some message about the relationship of their countries.[5] My best guess about what that message is, would be that our nations are locked in an agonistic Oedipal struggle. One version of the message comes along with the improbable thoughts of Tomás Arroyo, a young, illiterate revolutionary general:

> When the two gringos left Mexico, he wanted them to say: "I have been here. This land will always be a part of me now." That's what I ask of them. I swear: it's the only thing I ask. Don't forget us. But, more than anything, be us and still be yourself . . . and fuck it all.

In yet another way, *The Old Gringo* is only superficially set in Mexico: too often it sounds as if it's taking place in Faulkner country. The three main characters are doom–ridden very much in old Bill's way, their consciousnesses weighed down by the pasts of their races and families (all three have heavy, *heavy* problems with their fathers). Sometimes the prose gets embarrassingly close to the Mississippi master's:

> he saw in the passing Chihuahua landscape, in its tragic gesture of loss, less than Arroyo could tell him but more than he himself knew. . . . As if the story kept flowing without interrupting the rhythm of the train, or the rhythm of Arroyo's memory (the gringo knew that Arroyo was remembering, but he only knew: the Mexican stroked the papers as he would stroke his mother's cheek, or the curve of his lover's hip), each watched . . . etc. etc.

The sentence piles up clauses for another 122 words. People are always "thinking" or "feeling" things forced upon their minds by Fuentes' rhetoric. Here the old gringo has just ridden across the border:

> The mountains rose like worn, dark-skinned fists and the old man imagined the body of Mexico as a gigantic corpse with bones of silver, eyes of gold, flesh of stone, and balls hard as copper.

And then, of course, the obligatory touch of post-modern self-reflexivity: "Was he here to die or to write a novel about a Mexican

[5]THE OLD GRINGO, by *Carlos Fuentes*. Trans. by *Margaret Sayers Peden* and the author. Farrar Straus & Giroux. $14.95.

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general and an old gringo and a Washington schoolteacher lost in the deserts of northern Mexico?" The *very novel that Fuentes has written*! Finally, we have a good swatch of Lawrentian sex, which I won't quote out of sheer embarrassment for it. I really hate sex scenes where every little movement carries dark symbolic freight.

Actually, Fuentes had a clever idea here, for the old gringo turns out to be Ambrose Bierce, who in his old age, as my Columbia Encyclopedia says, "disappeared into Mexico, where all trace of him was lost." Fuentes imagines Bierce's last days, and borrows freely from the old wit's cynical aphorisms. Bierce doesn't want to fade away, as old soldiers are supposed to do, but to join up with Pancho Villa and go out in style. "To be a gringo in Mexico . . . ah, that is euthanasia." Being shot to rags against a Mexican wall "beats falling down the cellar stairs." Inside all the cotton-wadding *The Old Gringo* is a colorful historical novel, filled with vivid, often moving scenes of the peasants' revolt against their masters, and with Pancho himself riding in for a strong appearance. I think that historical novel is what Fuentes wanted to write, but didn't think he could without losing his world-class standing. It's good enough reading if you can ignore the portentous symbolism and rhetoric.

To get into Gilbert Sorrentino's *Odd Number*, you have also to ignore some pretentious prose.[6] It's there glaring at you from the dust jacket, abandon hope all ye who enter here. Happily, the pretention is not *in* the fiction, which turns out to have no need whatsoever of this fairly blatant invitation to academicism. Anyone who's practiced on a few modernist novels will get through Sorrentino without hifalutin Cliff's Notes. The copy is too long to quote entire, but it really takes the cake:

> Albert Einstein compared the universe to a Möbius strip, a seamless continuum with neither inside nor outside. Gilbert Sorrentino's new novel, *Odd Number*, gives this conception literary form . . .
>
> Formally, the book is divided into three parts that recall [they don't] the strophe, antistrophe, and epode of the Greek chorus . . .
>
> In the second part of the book . . . the same questions that were asked in the first part now yield new answers about problematical events . . . the reader begins to realize that we are dealing with a mystery in which the structure of the fiction itself is part of the mystery itself.
>
> . . . As the novel is made and unmade we are obliged to consider the possibility that the elaborate answers given to the questions have told us nothing and that the true answers may lie in the infinity that exists beyond the colon with which the book ceases.

[6]ODD NUMBER, by *Gilbert Sorrentino*. North Point Press. $16.50.

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In fact, when we get to Sorrentino's text, we find the work of a sophisticated, meticulous artist with a gift for comedy, a perfect-pitch ear for American speech and a deadly eye for what's out there in the eighties, albeit among what I can only call scumbag society. For a while, I tried to take notes to keep the large cast of characters straight, but the notes rapidly turned into a parody of themselves. There is really no story here, only a multitude of fragmented, intricately intertwined stories about a lot of people who grease each others' wheels. An anecdote with one set of names will turn up again, as in a tangle of shattered mirrors, pinned to an entirely different set of names we thought connected to other stories altogether. Sorrentino has great fun seducing the reader into trying to follow what can't be followed. After a while, one begins to see that *Odd Number* is not about characters at all, but is an acid sketch of a nasty, generally well-heeled milieu on the make.

The characters, rather the names, belong to or hang around the fringes of an inbred commercialized New York culture scene. It's clear that not one of them is a serious artist, but that art and culture have become ways of making the scene, being talked about, going to parties, turning a buck, turning a trick. It's ugly enough at that, uglier yet as we see this "art" world melding effortlessly into sleazy business deals, blackmail, extortion, forgeries, plagiarism, pornography, kinky sex (you name it), Mafia money and drug deals. This is an *Inferno* in which no one even knows where he or she is, and couldn't care less. The information comes to us at first through an aggressive interrrogation of someone who's had to sift through all the documents in the "case," and answers in a non-judgmental voice. It sounds like this:

and then he demanded that his wife do for him what what she did for Mr. Kahane what? Mr. Lewis said that he retired left the room so he didn't see whether or not Mrs. Henry yes there's one more thing Mr. Lewis said that he heard Mr. Henry say that he was damned if his wife was going to be a whore for Mr. Kahane too I don't know who he it might have been yes Mr. Lewis that he Mr. Henry was referring to I've told you at least ten times Mr. Lewis had done Mr. Henry a favor with Mr. Blanche Blanche Neige Press in getting Mr. Henry's book *The Orange Dress*? yes there's some evidence that Mr. Lewis interceded with Mr. Blanche concerning *The Orange Dress* too it could have been could have that Mrs. Henry was willing to and Mr. Henry too yes willing to do favors as you put it for Mr. Lewis in return for who? Cecil Tyrell? he was he was let me see, he was he was somehow involved with *The Party* the film project

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It is, as Gertrude Stein might have said, perhaps tedious but the more tedious it gets it gets less tedious too. In the second section the voice belongs to the world described, and is willing to comment:

> . . . I can remember the cover they did, bright red with the title and his name spelled out in letters drawn to look like stockings, black nylon stockings, and a little banner printed across the bottom, The blistering novel that enraged the women of America! Beautiful. . . . I can't begin to tell you how disgusted I was with all the, with everything, with everybody, it was all just, I don't know how to describe it. Just shit, you know? Shit. I really hated every motherfucking one of them, men and women and myself included.

That is, for what goes on in *Odd Number*, a reasoned and tempered judgment. An undoubtedly weird novel, a jeremiad iced by every distancing device available to post-modern humanity. Old fashioned moral disgust passing itself off as a Möbius strip. Sorrentino surpasses even Flaubert in the contempt he lavishes upon a world portrayed with extraordinary craft. This is an easy book to put down, but worth not putting down in order to watch the writer's infinite invention. Caviar for the general, virtuosic and merciless.

Three years ago I wrote enthusiastically in these pages about Junichirō Tanazaki's *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi* (1932), a tale that remains vividly in memory, as so many other books read two or three years ago fade gently away. I don't think anyone challenges the claim that Tanazaki is among the very greatest twentieth-century writers. Now Anthony H. Chambers, who provided the excellent translation of *The Secret History*, has published a beautifully-written English version, with a brief introduction, of Tanazaki's earliest serious fiction of length, *Naomi*.[7] Tanazaki began writing it for serial publication in 1924, then completed it in another newspaper, after the first had found it too shocking to go on with, in 1925. As a kind of "flapper" novel about a post-war generation thumbing its nose at old customs and ways, drinking cocktails and dancing away the nights, it has a place in Japanese literature something like that held in English by works like *The Great Gatsby* and *The Green Hat*. In *Naomi*, Tanazaki takes up the theme in which he clearly had an intense interest, and which he came back to in *The Secret History* and other works, sexual obsession. Jōji, who tells the story, is a twenty-eight-year-old Tokyo businessman who falls heavily for a fifteen-year-old cafe hostess, Naomi. She is surely one of the great, and most inventive, enchantresses in literature. At one point Jōji compares himself to Antony, Naomi to Cleopatra, and indeed she has an infinite variety, at least in dressing up (she never wears clothes, always costumes), tantalizing, deceiving, cuckolding, and

[7]NAOMI, by *Junichirō Tanazaki*. Trans. by *Anthony H. Chambers*. Knopf. $15.95.

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finding ways to keep poor Jōji's obsession, even when he's furious at her, rising to new refinements. Compared to Naomi, nobody, not even the rain, has such small, manipulative hands. Move over, Lola-Lola. Tanazaki has arranged the comedy so that we may, like Jōji, simultaneously stand aside outraged and laughing, yet burn with the lover's moment-to-moment pleasures and torments. There are no sex scenes, in the heavy-breathing way, and the eroticism is all the more pervasive and powerful for their absence. Among the side-pleasures that come along with the eight-year chronicle of Jōji and Naomi, are the glimpses we get of Japan's early-20s fascination with everything Western. (By no means the least of Naomi's attractions for Jōji is that she doesn't "look Japanese," but bears, in his eyes, a remarkable resemblance to Mary Pickford.) At every step it seems imperative that we know whether people live in a Japanese house or a Western house, wear Japanese or Western clothes, eat in Japanese or Western restaurants. Tanazaki's attitude toward all this, although he is always the comedian, is not clear. *Naomi* is hardly the occasion for sociological pontificating, yet one can't help but observe how Westernization, in 1920s Tokyo, is both cause and symptom of the breakdown of Japanese mores. This is a delightful book, a bit like Sorrentino's *Odd Number* in that the delicacy of the art forms a contrast with the coarseness of the subject under observation.

I've left myself too little room to do justice to two books, both of them coming, as it happens, from authors who live in Illinois. Daniel Curley's *Living with Snakes* is the winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction.[8] Curley has been for several years the discriminating editor of *Ascent*, a fine little magazine which specializes in short fiction. Every year I see a number of good short stories in its pages and elsewhere, but every year I find myself not writing about collections of short fiction, I suspect because the form itself leaves me unsatisfied. If the people or the subject are engaging, I must want to stick with them longer. Curley's stories of mid-America, unpretentious, highly crafted, generally comic or bittersweet, and closely-observed, are representative of the best short fiction being written today. I particularly enjoyed "Billy Will's Song," about a dreadful one-armed drunk, "a small man, but he dressed tough," being obnoxious to his girlfriend, Norma Jean, on a bus ride from Moline to Peoria. Curley's a careful writer, sharply attentive to details and to domestic crises in American lives.

It isn't often that a novelist makes a debut with a work as ambitious and dazzling as Richard Powers' *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance*.[9] It is a work of such complex structure, managed easily

[8]LIVING WITH SNAKES, by *Daniel Curley*. The University of Georgia Press. $13.95.

[9]THREE FARMERS ON THEIR WAY TO A DANCE, by *Richard Powers*. William Morrow. $17.95.

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and with enormous assurance, that an attempt to describe it other than sketchily would take several paragraphs. The frontispiece reproduces a striking photograph made in 1914 of three young men, hatted, carrying canes, posed but pretending casually to have halted as they walk along a dirt path. The dance they are on their way to, we discover, was a village *fête*, but also the First World War as Dance of Death. The picture is by August Sander, a German engaged in a vast idealistic photographic project which he called *Man in the Twentieth Century*. Two decades later his work was burned by the Nazis, and a decade further on most of his forty thousand negatives were destroyed by looters. Powers "reads" the photograph with love, patience, and imagination, and I found myself turning back to it over and over, watching it become part of his text and the text become part of it. From this picture, this *donnée*, Powers spins a splendid fiction. The lives of the three young men are reconstructed for us, each taking on a moving specificity. Their stories are interleaved with those of two young Americans in the 80s, one of whom sees the photo in a museum in Detroit and becomes obsessed with it, the other of whom writes for a second-rate computer magazine in Boston. The three layerings move in and out, counterpointing each other in surprising, ingenious ways. Powers is a learned writer, with an extraordinary range of reference, and his book is a prolonged, even profound meditation on the history of our century. He has the true gift of the writer of fiction, one that I think no labor can produce, the ability to create illusions of reality with economy of means. If you admire the best fictions of Guy Davenport, as I do enormously, you will like *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance*. Like Davenport, Powers is an archeologist of imagination and style.

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DICK ALLEN

Fire Burning in the Rain

IN A CENTURY AS SECULAR AND SKEPTICAL AS OURS, it is difficult for an Occidental to write about the mystical and find a receptive literary audience. Those with visionary, prophetic and mystical apprehensions risk having their insights identified with the simplicities of a Kahlil Gibran or a Shirley MacLaine, and thus mocked or easily discarded. Yet, such writers persist. Buttressed by a contemporary physics and astronomy which increasingly show the universe to be an interplay of the visible and invisible, a play of matter and energy, weak force and strong force in a dancing pattern closely approximating Eastern religious theory, these few writers continue to attempt the transmission of what they feel is more real than the materialistic. The most successful of such fictional efforts come about when the mystical is embedded in groundworks and frameworks of meticulously-done detail, so that its sense is presented as part of the natural pattern of life rather than as occupying some realm outside or beyond it.

So it is with Ursula K. Le Guin's new work, *Always Coming Home.*[1] Although this book could be described as the portrayal in depth of a futuristic utopian society set up to criticize the present industrial-technological one of the West, such a reading would confront mainly the vehicle of Le Guin's work, not its essence. Le Guin's abiding purpose, I believe, is to ease her readers into sharing mystical apprehensions. This is a "teaching" book, a book everywhere permeated by the sense of the mystical.

But the reader should be forewarned. *Always Coming Home* is more a gathering of anthropological items than a narrative. Imagine, as Le Guin does, a small American Indian-like society of the far future, its people occupying a valley of what is presently northern California. Life expectancy is less than forty, for there is a high infant mortality rate stemming from diseases caused by radioactivity and toxic waste pollution. Progress, as we think of it in the twentieth century, has been left to the City of Mind, a place of machines. This machine place—just like our own time, called here "The City of Man"—lies "outside the world" and is of little concern to the principal characters of the book, the gentle Kesh. The mysticism of *Always Coming Home* emerges from an extensive, multi-faceted portrayal of Kesh culture:

[1] ALWAYS COMING HOME, by Ursula K. Le Guin. Harper & Row. Slipcased with cassette tape. $50; $25.

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> Is it possible that natural selection had had time to work in social as well as physical and intellectual terms? Were the people of the Na valley . . . in fact healthier than I realized—healthier than I am capable of fully understanding, so long as I must look at them from outside their world? In leaving progress to the machines, in letting technology go forward on its own terms and selecting from it, with what seems to us excessive caution, modesty, or restraint, the limited though completely adequate implements of their cultures, is it possible that in this opting not to move "forward" or not only "forward," these people did in fact succeed in living in human history, with energy, liberty, and grace?

The implied answer is, of course, yes. Although they have access to the vast store of information kept by the City of Mind, via the computer link-up of the Exchange, and although a small railway line links their valley to other places where humans dwell, the Kesh concentrate on just living as well and as fully as possible.

Most of *Always Coming Home* delineates how they live and Le Guin provides a huge range of documents, building her Archaeology of the Future: songs, charts, maps, a 100-page back-of-the-book section giving information on what the Kesh wore and ate as well as their musical instruments, their dances, medical practices, their alphabet and the like; a glossary of Kesh words; some 150 pages of transcribed Kesh stories, histories, romantic tales, a chapter from a Kesh novel; and about fifty pages of Kesh poetry. The main narrative of the book is the story of Stone Telling, a Kesh woman born in the Valley, then taken by her father to another society, and finally escaping back to the Valley. It actually takes only one-fifth of the volume.

Stone Telling's life story, told with great grace and beauty, has many functions. It is a coming-of-age story as the narrator recalls how, when young, she walked the mountains alone, tried to understand her Kesh mother and absent warrior-Condor father. It is a story used to give readers a full sense of Kesh lives and outlooks: Stone Telling moves through life stages, at each one adopting a new name. It is a symbolic and archetypal journey from home and then back to home, the narrator's father finally sacrificing his life to free Stone Telling and her daughter and her friend Shadow. And it is a life story used to contrast Kesh culture with the culture of the Dayao. The Dayao are militaristic and their women are not equals of their Condor male leaders, this shown in almost point by point contrast with the Kesh's society of male and female equality. The Dayao are obviously reflections of us: "Everything among the Dayao had to have a chief. If two of them were together, one or the other was chief. Everything they did was war. Even when people worked together one of them was chief of the work, as if working were making war."

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Toward the end of Stone Telling's story, the Dayao and their Condor fighters grow sick as a result of their war-making and polarizing attitudes; their attempt at extending their power over other humans fails. Yet Stone Telling has learned, through her experience, to know the basis of two cultures at once. She has, in herself, felt the attraction of power and imbalance and even willed subservience. Such knowledge is fitting, for Kesh people do not pretend to be perfect and their world of praise also contains clowns, gamblers, ghosts, and warriors. Their world is not the unpeopled architect's blueprint of Utopia.

The book is thoroughly illustrated by Margaret Chodos' fine line drawings of plants, animals, birds, spirals, eyes, Kesh instruments, dwellings, and similar objects. It comes slipcased with a cassette of Kesh music, songs, and poetry—music composed by Todd Barton, words by Le Guin.

Listening to the cassette after reading a few hundred pages of the book emphasizes our sense of immersion in Kesh day-to-day life. The sounds of rain and running water are pervasive; a "Homesick Song" lets us listen to a group of Kesh fifty miles from their beloved Valley, as they sing around a flickering fire; we hear the Heron Dance, "Yes-Singing" from the sensual Moon Dance, a young father singing a lullabye, the lovely "Quail Song" and—most haunting—an example of ritual "long-singing" and then "floating on the wind" music from the great horns: sacred music of the House of the Coyote, the Wind, and the Wilderness.

Strangely, this construct of book, drawings, and "field-recorded" cassette works. Music and poems and stories and data combining, I felt myself drawn down into this rainy Valley, accepting the Valley society and its people as the norm and all outside the Valley as abnormal. In the spell of the Valley, what is to be praised is *wakwa* (dance) and the life is "*heya, heyiya*—the connotations of which include sacredness, hinge, connection, spiral, center, praise, and change . . . the heyiya-if, two spirals centered upon the same (empty) space was . . . the visual form of an idea which pervaded the thought and culture of the Valley." We enter into the "Kesh sense of community, of continuity with the dirt, water, air, and living creatures of the Valley." It is a place where "people who don't own much because they keep giving things away are rich, while those who give little and so own much are poor." Vision and prophecy are accepted here; there is a vague belief in reincarnation although the Kesh "had no god; they had no gods; they had no faith." The all-encompassing view is perhaps best expressed in these words from one of the book's many documents, "The Visionary: The Life Story of Flicker of the Serpentine of Telina-na":

> At the Exchange it is taught that the electrical mental network of the City extends from all over the surface of the world out

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> past the moon and the other planets to unimaginable distances among the stars: in the vision, all that vast web was one momentary glitter of light on one wave on the ocean of the universe of power, one fleck of dust on one grass-seed in unending fields of grass. The images of the light dancing on the waves of the sea or on dust motes, the glitter of light on ripe grass, the flicker of sparks from a fire, are all I have: no image can contain the vision, which contained all images. Music can mirror it better than words can, but I am no poet to make music of words. Foam, and the scintillation of mica in rock, the flicker and sparkle of waves and dust, the working of the great broadcloth looms, and all dancing, have reflected the hawk's vision for a moment to my mind; and indeed everything would do so, if my mind were clear and strong enough. But no mind or mirror can hold it without breaking.

So, like Flicker, a mystically-oriented writer peers through the dark glass and *suggests*, by images, tones, nuances, leaps of consciousness, abrupt contrasts of the mundane and the profound or sacred, magical interpolations, questions, prose or poetry which flows in and out of sudden whirlpool harmonies—*suggests* by every device and form available at her or his stage of writing ability—*suggests* the numinous, the holy, *heya*, what is always there, world without end and amen, but obscured—and still knows that the obscuring, too, is part of the pattern. So in "A Hole in the Air" a Kesh man comes into our world, the world of the "backward-head" people: "He stayed still, not knowing what else to do, and after a while he saw that they were looking through him. They couldn't see anything that was even inside the world." He heard constantly, "Kill people! Kill people!" The backward-head people "had electrical wires in their ears and were deaf. They smoked tobacco day and night, and were constantly making war. He tried to get away from the war by going on, but it was everywhere they lived, and they lived everywhere."

In "Chandi" (a play retelling the story of Job) the question is asked, *"How shall a human being live well, then?"* The last words of the play are, "There are the stars, shining. / There is nothing between the stars, / the dark dancing." In "Words/Birds": "The world is the bridge between the walls of a canyon, the banks of a river in an abyss, and words are the birds that fly across and across. They cannot be in two places at the same time. But they can cross and come back. It takes all one's life long to cross the bridge to the other side. But the birds fly back and forth across the canyon, singing and speaking from one side to the other."

Again, let me stress that *Always Coming Home* is better read as non-fiction than fiction. Even in the three-part story of Stone Telling there is little suspense, tension, or dramatized conflict, and the technique of the book (twice interrupting the narrative flow of

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Stone Telling's novelette by huge swatches of other material) does not encourage us to be fully caught up with the characters. We are, for the most part, left outside looking in—observing, studying, being taught, amused, sometimes delighted, sometimes a little bored. The poems are well composed, but nothing special. They're mainly the rather plain and poignant ones we expect to find in a collection of material drawn from the culture of somewhat primitive Indian tribes: individually affecting in their simple beats, syllabics, words and basic images—their willed simplicity their main recommendation. And if the book can be said to have a main flaw, it is in the unvarying calm tone of almost all its material; it all sounds like Le Guin, no matter who is purported to have composed it.

Still . . .

I remember being deeply moved, as many were, when during my reading of Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* I could not turn away from the knowledge that total nuclear war, destroying our planet in the here and now, would also mean that we would be destroying not only all the past but all the future, all human history as yet unrealized in chronological time. *Always Coming Home*, like Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*, imagines some of that future history, imagines what *could* be, imagines survivors, gives us a vision of something for which it is worth holding the death wish at bay. Le Guin tirelessly maintains that there *is* an alternate way of life possible for the human; as a novelist, she writes to show how it can work, how the "mystical" and the "practical" can be combined. Her alternate way, she shows us, is not alien. It can be derived out of what we can recognize even now from the Book of Job, from Blake, from the *Tao*, from the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, from known or remembered Earth cultures far gentler and more loving than ours, from dance and play and ritual and song, from another understanding of Time, from doing as Stone Telling does when she comes to know that

> we have to learn what we can, but remain mindful that our knowledge not close the circle, closing out the void, so that we forget that what we do not know remains boundless, without limit or bottom, and that what we know may have to share the quality of being known with what denies it. What is seen with one eye has no depth.

Pandora, a figure who comments now and then in the book and appears to be Le Guin's stand-in, "doesn't want to look into the big end of the telescope and see, jewel-bright, distinct, tiny, and entire, the Valley. She shuts her eyes, she doesn't want to see, she knows what she will see: Everything Under Control. The dolls' house. The dolls' country." Instead, she rushes out and grabs "Bits, chunks, fragments. Shards. Pieces of the Valley, lifesize. Not at a distance,

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but in the hand, to be felt and held and heard. . . . even if the pattern is incomplete (and the pattern is incomplete), let the mind draw its energy. Let the heart complete the pattern."

She would doubtlessly agree with Le Guin's own views of fiction, expressed in her noted essay "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown":

> All I know is that we are here, and that we are aware of the fact, and that it behooves us to be aware—to pay heed. For we are not objects. That is essential. We are subjects and whoever among us treats us as objects is acting inhumanly, wrongly, against nature. And with us, nature, the great Object, its tirelessly burning suns, its turning galaxies and planets, its rocks, seas, fish and ferns and fir trees and little furry animals, all have become, also, subjects. As we are part of them, so they are part of us. Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. We are their consciousness. If we stop looking, the world goes blind. If we cease to speak and listen, the world goes deaf and dumb. If we stop thinking, there is no thought. If we destroy ouselves, we destroy consciousness.
>
> And all this, the seeing, hearing, speaking, thinking, feeling—all this we do one by one. The great mystics have gone deeper than community and sensed identity, the identity of all; but we ordinary souls cannot do that, or only for a moment, maybe one moment in a lifetime. One by one we live, soul by soul. The person, the single person. Community is the best we can hope for. . . .[2]

Le Guin is a Taoist writer who over and over stresses in her works the need for imagination, Truth (she often writes of it with a capital), moral purpose and hope. Her refusal to let her work fall into a single category, her insistence on fiction stressing the individual personality, her stance against "perfection," and her constant concern with human guilt make it increasingly apparent that her work draws not so much from science fiction as from the great wellsprings and forests of the American soul-searching consciousness. She is, I believe, our contemporary Hawthorne.

[2] *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, by Ursula K. Le Guin, ed. by Susan Wood (New York, 1982), pp. 106-107.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Better Late than Never

A WELL-KNOWN CRITIC ONCE CONFIDED TO ME that he could never get past the opening pages of any of the big Russian novels. There were, he said, so many characters and they had such outlandish names that he just couldn't keep them straight. Enough said, I thought. A few weeks ago, however, while laboring through not only the opening pages but in fact the first fifty or hundred of another big nineteenth-century novel, I remembered him all at sea among those polysyllabic patronymical Slavs and managed to grudge some tardy sympathy for his confusion. Here in *La Regenta*[1] I was feeling the same sort of confusion myself between Don Cayetano Ripamilán and Don Frutos Redondo and Doña Visitación Olías de Cuervo among an invincible armada of Spanish monikers, each brought on with an optimistic flourish of identifying data and then shunted off to be held in reserve for future use, now that we "know" them. If only we did.

Leopoldo Alas is no Tolstoy (Leopoldo, not alas! Leo); *La Regenta* isn't *Anna Karenina* in a black lace mantilla; it wastes our goodwill before getting beyond these unhelpful introductions of a cast of thousands; it isn't really as big a novel as its length pretends it is, because much of it comprises unserviceable and virtually unvarying redoings of scenes, themes, routines, crises, and confrontations already done and overdone in earlier chapters; besides, in the course of the novel Alas seems to lose his grip on some of the characters, or maybe to change his mind about them, so that local inconsistencies and discontinuities deflect their attitudes and behavior disconcertingly from time to time. Nobody should be advised to snap it up for a model of fictional construction or for summer fun in a hammock. Nevertheless it's good enough, and similar enough in its material, to stand comparison with *Madame Bovary* (but isn't at all, as contemporaries accused it of being, a barefaced steal), and Alas's creative energy like Flaubert's is the energy of an exceptionally heartfelt and comprehensive hatred. Now, a century after it was written, it's still alive and kicking in this first English translation, an idiomatic and fluently readable one by John Rutherford.

Despairing of an English equivalent, Rutherford retains for his translation the original title, which he glosses as "the woman who

[1] LA REGENTA, by *Leopoldo Alas*. Translated with an Introduction by *John Rutherford*. Penguin. $14.95p.

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rules." We've met her before, the woman who makes things go though not necessarily for the better: *La Regenta* is a grim exemplum about the wages of sin for a provincial bourgeois wife, who takes a lover because her devoted husband is too dull and unsexy to fulfill her romantic yearnings. Just like Emma Bovary, Charles, and Rodolphe; but one enormous difference is how many months of tricks and scheming and backtracking and stalling Alvaro Mesía requires to accomplish his seduction—almost the length of the novel—because Ana Ozores, vulnerable though she is, has strengths and resistances ("the woman who rules") that on the other side of the Pyrenees no Gallic misogynist could ever have imagined in a woman. Indeed, Ana is stubborn and virtuous enough not only to hold but to hold off, through most or in one instance all of a very long novel, *two* suitors: Mesía, the veteran lady-killer who in this present campaign is often obliged to play it safe and wait and hope like a novice; also, Fermín De Pas, a wilful and unscrupulous young priest, occupying by sheer ability and the favor of his bishop two posts in the cathedral chapter that give him, as Rutherford says, "respectively prestige and power, which together mean domination of [the town of] Vetusta. As canon theologian—the canon appointed to deliver sermons on special occasions—he basks in the admiration of the public, and in particular of wealthy pious ladies, his spiritual daughters. As vicar-general of an ineffective bishop he works behind the scenes in the diocesan curia to gain great power and amass a fortune."

So Alas intends De Pas to dominate the town and perhaps likewise—despite its title—the novel, as a tragic figure if not a tragic hero, anyhow larger than life and doomed, a man of force who by answering the call of the Church missed for a lifetime his vocation: political? amatory? but late-nineteenth-century Spain has no politics, merely a dispirited truce of factions (after fifty years of rebellions and inconclusive dynastic wars that Alas's readers don't need to be reminded of); and De Pas's furious sensuality, justified and aggrandized by his unrequited passion for Ana, can never gratify itself more grandly than with one or another of the clever, vicious, vindictive, and freely available maidservants of Vetusta. "The blame of it all," he muses toward the end in a rage of frustration, "lay with his soutane," which at last he can't avoid thinking of as a masquerade costume: "The maniac notion that he was wearing fancy dress had become an intolerable obsession." All dressed up and nowhere to party.

De Pas makes his first appearance—the first major character on the scene—in the highest place of Vetusta, the cathedral tower; but hardly as a tragic figure. Alas's first description of him is an acid bath of details: e.g. his "expression of prudence verging on cowardly hypocrisy and revealing a cold and calculating egotism. It could be avowed with confidence that those lips guarded like a treasure

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the supreme word, that word which is never spoken"; thereupon, having posed for his portrait, De Pas removes from his cassock pocket a "spyglass," extends it to its full length, and gazes through it at the town which, lying "humbled all around him at his feet," though not Rome or the wide world as he had once dared to dream, even so for the poor shepherd boy from the mountain country represents "the culmination of his wildest desires. . . . He was thirty-five years old now, and his greed for power was stronger and less idealistic; he was satisfied with less, but desired it more intensely, needed it nearer at hand. His was the hunger which will not wait, the burning thirst in the desert which is sated in a dirty puddle without waiting to discover the distant hidden spring." Big ideas for a big novel about a big frog in a small toxic pond.

Yet these melodramatic summings-up of De Pas at first and at last aren't fair to the complex tormented character himself in the thick of the narrative from day to day. As you would never guess from what Alas periodically moralizes himself into saying about him, De Pas is capable of discrimination and judgment, capable of right reason, capable of reasonable fear (but, despite what Alas says, never thinks or does anything at all that comes within miles of "verging on cowardly hypocrisy"), capable of love and of a love of virtue. He's quite reasonably afraid of his terrific mother, who in behalf of their mutual ambition for him has sacrificed her own honor and virtue as well as his, who does the dirty work of the commerce in religious merchandise that makes them rich and hated, who knows his weaknesses (says nothing when he can get away with indulging them, tells him off when he can't: "these fine ladies suck away at your life, . . . they destroy in a month what it took me twenty years to build"), keeps tabs on his enemies ("Can't you see they're after your blood?"), sifts the town gossip for whatever might advance or damage his prospects, broods over him like a thundercloud. The two good priests among the numerous cathedral denizens in the novel are also the priests who admire De Pas: the saintly Bishop; and the peppery old cleric who used to write very theoretical verses of lyric longing and still enjoys loose talk about the sexes, Don Cayetano Ripamilán, whom moreover De Pas loves and values:

> [De Pas] was only there for a private talk with Don Cayetano, and endured his impertinent remarks with patience, for he had a high regard for the old man, and forgave him his innocent displays of rhetorical eroticism because he knew his conduct to be irreproachable, and his heart to be of gold. They were good friends, and Ripamilán was Don Fermín's most determined and enthusiastic supporter in the struggles which took place within the chapter. Others were his followers out of self-interest, and many out of fear, but Don Cayetano was incapable of fearing anyone and helped and loved Don Fermín because, in his opinion,

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> he was the only outstanding man in the cathedral[,] . . . a scholar, an orator, a politician, a man of letters, and, most important of all, Ripamilán believed, a man of the world. When there was talk of the vicar-general's alleged venality, of his tyranny, of his sordid trafficking, the old man became indignant and roundly denied even the most probable cases of simony. But if the topic of his amorous adventures—no more than a collection of anonymous rumours, without the support of any factual evidence—was brought up, the archpriest smiled as he made his denials, as if to say that it was all quite possible, but of less moment.

Nor is De Pas the wolf in priest's clothing that his mother's accusations and Don Cayetano's guileless unconcern suggest. His sensuality doesn't automatically overwhelm his taste: for instance Obdulia the luscious leisure-class sex-object exercises her charms on him with no effect but to make him keep his distance; as for his hasty encounters with one maidservant or another ("feeling full of angelical love, yet falling again and again into the crudest kind of liaison and satisfying his basest appetites like any wretch"), they're at least raw and desperate, they blank out for the instant his baffled love of Ana, who in the service of her own dear Don Fermín will do anything but cease adoring him as her infallible spiritual father. What she promises him and flagrantly goes ahead and does to acknowledge and publicize his mastery over her is walk barefoot as a penitent in the Good Friday procession: Lady Godiva to the toenail-fetishists; except that for this new Godiva the entire town of Peeping Toms pours out and gapes brazenly in disbelief, dismay, derision, and envy (Obdulia: "Barefoot! . . . it's something—exquisitely stylish"). Ana's humiliation is De Pas's triumph—"she was there to proclaim his glory"—but his final one. Even Ana, even during the act itself, recognizes that she was moved by "vanity, not piety": "For Ana, her naked feet were the nakedness of her whole body and soul. 'She was a madwoman who had fallen into a singular kind of prostitution! She did not know why, but she thought that after this promenade of shame there was no honour left in her home. . . .' "

Not less flawlessly wicked than De Pas, so Alas affirms, is Alvaro Mesía, De Pas's successful rival in the contest for Ana's body and/or soul. Mesía is in his forties, Don Juan and political hack, a two-faced opportunist as Alas describes him who—such being Alas's presumption about D.J.'s—neither early nor late has ever had the robust appetite to play the sex-game for its own sake; who in his prime "had conquered for the sake of conquering" but now in decline "was, above all, a political man . . . who used love and other passions for his own personal gain" (though, typically, Alas neglects to give us more than the sketchiest impression of Mesía's political involvements, and though at any rate his interest in Ana has no such use or motive). Also, according to Alas, Mesía's "cold eyes," when they

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observe Ana walking past him with a look of indifference, are "charged" with a "mixture of lust [heat from behind the cold eyes? robust appetite busting out like the old Adam?] and irritated self-love." Cold or hot—a villain, an arrant villain.

Still, Mesía is one of those cynics who pride themselves on proceeding from the worst motives, or in any case the motives most consistent with their past behavior; whereas attentive readers might argue on the contrary that through much of the narrative Mesía convicts himself of being, despite what he (or Alas) says, merely in love and nothing more, banally in love against his will and his very principles:

> Mesía was not in a hurry. 'She wasn't like other married women, she had to be conquered like a virgin. After all, he was her first love, and brutal attacks would scare her, rob her of all her illusions. Besides, he was also being rejuvenated by this situation of platonic love, of sweet intimacy, in which not only his tongue, but the eyes and the smiles (and everything else which was silent and not immodest or coarse) of both of them spoke love. . . .
>
> In the meantime, life was delightful. The mature Don Juan . . . felt transformed by Anita's youth and her dreamy yet vehement passion. Don Alvaro could not remember ever having desired a woman, or enjoyed platonic love (as he called all unconsummated love), as much as he did now.

Mesía may, then, feel more love for Ana than would be conceded by his author, who detests him. On the other hand, when Mesía's feelings are painful and mortifying they're in the direct line of Alas's intentions for him, as when Mesía recognizes he's no longer up to his job of champion lover; when, out of the limelight of the plot and in the privacy of his feelings, he enacts the sort of comedy that's a laugh riot for Alas and us but not for the star of it. It's the comedy of the man (for a change) as sex-object; or rather the shady little sideshow of the all too readily depleted male trying to husband, so to speak, his precious bodily fluids against the demands of the rapacious female. It's a sub-genre that doesn't seem to occur to Flaubert, whose Rodolphe like any other conquering hero is smugly adequate to Emma's demands; but Alas inflicts it on Mesía with a vengeance. In the great gorgeous scene of the ball, in which *La Regenta* overmatches *Madame Bovary* and may for once be fairly compared with *Anna Karenina,* Ana is so moonstruck by her seducer that, when afterward Mesía has a moment by himself to consider what in her transport she must have been led to expect, the idea of his victory serves mainly to dampen him with premonitions of his comic fall. The victor as victim. Ana, "the woman who rules," does her thing again, not barefoot this time but in ball slippers; performs her second public surrender to a conquered hero when toward the

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end of the whirlwind evening she yields to the temptation of dancing with Mesía:

> She had almost forgotten how to dance the polka. Mesía was lifting her off her feet, as if he were abducting her. He could feel that firm, burning body, with its gentle curves, trembling in his hands.
>
> Ana was silent, she could not see, she could not hear, all she could do was feel a pleasure which was like fire; this intense irresistible delight terrified her; she let herself be carried on like a dead body or the victim of a disaster; it seemed as if something inside her had snapped—virtue, or faith, or shame; she was lost, she vaguely thought.
>
> In his imagination the president of the Gentlemen's Club was caressing that treasure of physical beauty which he held in his arms. 'She's mine! That canon must be a coward! She's mine. This is the first embrace the poor woman has ever enjoyed.' It was a dissembled, hypocritical, diplomatic embrace—but for Anita it was an embrace!
>
> 'Don't Alvaro and Ana look dull!' said Obdulia to her partner, Ronzal.
>
> Mesía noticed that Ana's head was falling upon the spotless, shining shirt-front which Blunderbuss so admired. He stopped, put his head on one side to look at her, and saw that she had fainted. On her pale cheeks there were two tears, and another two had dropped upon the starched cloth of his shirt-front. General alarm. . . .

But Mesía the old soldier of love understands that a woman's surrender may well be the beginning of the man's ordeal: "As Don Alvaro prepared for bed, and placed a warm flannel undergarment on a hanger, he murmured, as if he were talking to the bed while he turned down the sheet: 'It's a pity this campaign finds me—not quite so young as I used to be!' "

> During the first month she astounded him. . . . Often when he was in a talkative mood she would cover his mouth with her hand and say in ecstasies of love, 'Don't speak.' . . . He was jaded and weary, but he was still a good fighting cock, capable of fearlessly dying of pleasure. Yet although Mesía was so happy, he was uneasy too.
>
> 'You are looking unwell,' said Somoza.
>
> 'Be careful now,' repeated Visitación.
>
> He himself noticed that his face was losing the youthful look which it had recovered during those months of healthy living, exercise and abstinence—his prudent preparation for the decisive attack on the fortress of Ana's honour.

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> Yes, he could feel a creaking inside his body from time to time. . . . Dying was one thing; but inexorably declining in front of Ana was quite another. It would be horrible: ridiculous and infamous. Yes, he would be breaking his oath if he grew old and weak. He shuddered as he remembered past periods of his life when temporary shortcomings . . . had made him resort to embarrassing stratagems. . . . This shamming of youth, virility and constancy in physical love reminded Don Alvaro of the resources of ostentatious beggary described by Quevedo in *The Great Skinflint.* He himself had been a Great Skinflint of love more than once, after periods as a spendthrift, but he couldn't play the old tricks now. 'No, he would rather run away, or shoot himself. Ana, poor Ana, had a right to eternal, inexhaustible youth.' . . .

(Sounds like love to me, in spite of Alas's angry denials.) Further, the sideshow has generated a sideshow of its own: poor harried Mesía needs to neutralize Ana's clever, vicious, vindictive, and freely available maidservant, who—like her mistress after all—insists on being paid with love, not sweet talk; nor money either; but "Don Alvaro knew he could no longer pay Petra for her services with love, because it was becoming more and more vital to economize."

All the men are in love with Ana, and, according to Alas, why not? Not only beautiful but, as her doctor says to her understandably anxious old husband,

> '. . . a woman of extremes. Vivacious. Excitable. She needs plenty of activity, something to stimulate her—she needs . . .' [ellipsis Alas's]
>
> Benítez chewed his cigar and looked at Don Victor with a mysterious expression of pity mixed with mockery; the old man opened his eyes wide.
>
> 'What does she need?'
>
> 'What I have said. A strong stimulus, something to engage her attention in a—forceful way; some activity on a grand scale. . . . Yesterday she was a mystic, in love with heaven; today she eats heartily, she goes for walks in the open air among trees and flowers. . . .'

Alas too is in love with Ana, he would be thrilled to accompany her on those idyllic strolls; but that's because she seems to him more interesting and more lovable than the evidence he puts together in the text suffices to certify. His circumstantial account of her deprived childhood (no doubt meant to explain and excuse her craving for novelty as a grownup) is strenuously partisan and, except for the purpose of forcing our commiseration, pointless; his voluminous contriving of hobbies and humors and—whether with St. Teresa or De Pas or Mesía—infatuations to fill up her time becomes

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tiresome. Alas wants Dr. Benítez to be right about Ana; but she isn't so much vivacious or excitable or passionate as, in one tradition of heroines of nineteenth-century fiction, uneducated and sentimental. The men she rules are, if not more lovable than she is, at least more interesting to think about.

Among them, finally, are two perfect innocents: her husband, Don Victor Quintanar; and his hunting companion, Don Tomás Crespo, known as "Frillity" (because he expresses his tolerance for people's foibles with a little joke about "human *frillity*"). In Ana's youth Frillity is a sort of guardian, her only "true friend": "He had a keen scent for goodness in human souls, and had divined spiritual treasures in Anita." To rescue Ana from her harpy aunts he arranges the match with Quintanar, and thereafter works quietly to keep them from harm. Frillity is a noble but unrealized conception: he drops out of one's mind through the stretches of the novel where he's absent or too quiet; and, though his efforts toward the end to salvage as much as possible from the disaster are Alas's best use of him, they don't come soon enough to save either him or his friends.

Quintanar has a far larger role than Frillity, and in addition a less ephemeral presence: a silly, fussy, self-important little man; a good man who talks a lot, gets in the way, and learns nothing except that goodness isn't enough; still, through most of the narrative, more nearly an essential function than a character until toward the end he has to face the unimaginable horror of his wife's infidelity:

> He sat down on a stone bench. But he stood up straight away. The cold of the seat had penetrated his bones. In his body there was a strange lethargy, a physical self-concern which seemed unworthy of himself and of the circumstances. He was very cold and very sleepy. Much against his will he was thinking about this with perfect clarity, while the ideas relating to his misfortune, his dishonour and his shame were unmanageable, eluding him, mingling together and refusing to be ordered in the form of a rational argument.

The episode, which goes on for many pages, is varied, faultlessly modulated, and heartbreaking. *La Regenta* is an uneven, untidy, redundant, excessive novel; but this episode and all the other notable episodes, insights, instants, situations, revelations make it one of the permanent novels of the nineteenth century, and in this new translation a belated happy find for the English-speaking reader.

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HARRY GOLDGAR

Phenomenal Illusion

CONSIDER CRAB, THE DOG WHO TAGS ALONG with Launce, "a clownish servant," in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. As a completely unself-conscious creature, who may wag his tail, bark, or urinate, to whom his part in the play is simply an event like any other in his doggy life, Crab is a delegate from our world, the audience's world, the "real" world, to the theatrical illusion. Viewed another way, the stage illusion has taken a bite out of the world of everyday. "The dog on the stage," says Bert O. States in his witty and brilliant phenomenological discussion of theater,[1] "is a nearly perfect symptom of the cutting edge of theater, the bite that it takes into actuality in order to sustain itself in the dynamic order of its own ever-dying signs and images. One could define the history of theater—especially where we find it overthrowing its own traditions—as a progressive colonization of the real world." Crab is "simply at the lowest echelon of living things that come on stage tethered to the real world."

In the first half of his book, States develops this discovery, that the theater "consumes" reality, that the "roughage of hard-core reality nourishes the illusionary system." The disposition of furniture on the stage, which appears for the first time in the 19th century, is an example. And "with the chair we see the gradual atrophy of verbal scenery," the setting now no longer a construct of language. The chair made conversation possible, "talk leading to tension and crisis," and the realistic theater bloomed.

States likes the old-fashioned word "catharsis" for what happens in the theater. What is purged is *time*, which is no longer random but shaped by the action. This "purgative reckoning" takes place in the "little room" of the stage (see the book's title). In Shakespeare, of course, language creates the scenery of the reckoning, its "dense metaphorical world"—States has little use for films of Shakespeare that attempt, hopelessly, to compete with speech images. In Ibsen and Chekhov, States's chief examples of the realistic theater, metaphor is displaced in "a new relationship between perceived space and heard language." Hedda Gabler's opening exclamation, "Good heavens—what a nuisance! That maid's opened the window and let in a whole flood of sunshine," serves States as a springboard for

[1] GREAT RECKONINGS IN LITTLE ROOMS: On the Phenomenology of Theater, by *Bert O. States*. University of California. $21.50.

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some of his most accomplished analysis, all about nature in Shakespeare and in realistic drama. In Shakespeare the stage contains things outside of it, makes invisible things visible, as he shows, by metaphor; in plays where the "little room" is full of furniture, this happens by metonymy and synecdoche. And in Chekhov, he says, the "fateful participation of setting in drama" comes to full flower. Chekhov's medium is time; Ibsen's is space. "Out of Ibsen will come Pinter; out of Chekhov, Beckett."

So we move on to expressionism, the next station stop after realism "had perfected the fusion of psychology and scenery." Naturalism had been unable to represent the inside of the head; with the advent of the new psychological discoveries there remained nothing new for it to do. It was time for the expressionist revolution, a style that could juxtapose varying degrees of realism and nonrealism, a *transitional* style. States finds that Brecht's "theater of estrangement" is both like and unlike expressionist drama; the difference (and this is a lens through which may be viewed the whole history of theater) is one of "psychical distance between stage and audience." Wilder's *Our Town*, strikingly enough, like Brecht's plays, "expands the horizon of the image" and at the same time doubles back to Shakespeare, who could write, "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them."

States's leading examples of postnaturalist or experimental theater are Artaud and Grotowski, who illustrate, opposite Brecht, "the extremes of empathy in the theater of the estranged sign." (States has quoted Barthes on Brecht as a paradigm of postnaturalist theater: "Revolutionary art must admit a certain arbitrary nature of signs.") Artaud indeed is at war with the "tyranny of reference"; his is a phenomenological, not a semiological, theater. In contrast to Brecht, this new theater aims at the "willing suspension of our self-isolation . . ., to unite the body of the actor and the soul of the audience in an act of discovery."

This first half of States's book is splendidly argued and full of surprising insights, as when he remarks that the bookcase Gaev addresses in *The Cherry Orchard* represents "the ironic nonresponse of the world." But I like even better his second half, which is about actors and acting. Even more obviously than in his earlier pages, the writer is a worker in the living, breathing theater. He begins this part by noting that the actor's vulnerability (to mistake or accident) bonds us with him empathically, making the play "one long danger" that the actor may again become one of us. The actor "risks the stage," demanding, when he plays Hamlet, to be compared to the "real" Hamlet.

In relation to the text, first of all, the actor validates the poet's vision of the world. "The actor is living proof that the play is true." He starts from nothing—he is merely one of us—and becomes Othello. The dramatist therefore must offer the actor a text where he can "change before our eyes, even if the change consists in re-

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maining himself at all times." Every character trait is an event in the plot. "We begin with a given number of elements and we use them up as efficiently as possible. . . . The cast of characters announces the ingredients in the play's forthcoming feat of efficient demolition."

The play, States pursues, is a closed field, where everything faces in toward center (the stage). Every character, facing in, "shows only its contributory side." Everything happens through the actor; the dramatic text passes through his body. For all these reasons, the play is an event in the real world, whereas cinema and fiction are not. This brings us easily to Molière's death while acting in his own *Le malade imaginaire* on 17 February 1673: "Nature . . . was improvising her own play-within-a-play in which Molière . . . was enacting his own death."

States's final chapter deals with the actor in relation to the audience. We, the community, he says, need the *thing* that goes on in the theater, relic of prehistoric ritual as it may or may not be. Certain individuals embody this thing: these are the actors, our delegates.

According to States's scheme, an actor may perform in one of three pronominal modes (which exist not in a pure state but simultaneously). The first is naturally the "I" mode, the "self-expressive." The actor challenges, "See what I can do." "He bets the audience that he is actor enough to fill the character's shoes." This mode produces the famous thespian—Duse, Bernhardt, Kean, Olivier. Here we are aware of the *artist* in the actor.

The second mode is the "collaborative," the "you" mode. Here the spectator's role is more than passive. Thus this mode is rarely found in tragedy, where each spectator is silently "dissolved in a . . . magnificent loneliness." But some kinds of drama, as we have seen earlier, need a character who will represent the audience on the stage. Comedy is thus the naturally collaborative mode. As in Brecht, the actor "aligns the audience empathically with his critical self, not the self he is portraying." Or it happens as in Peter Handke's *Offending the Audience*, where "the process of the play is a disgorging of theater into the world." (In Bert O. States's phenomenology, theater not only consumes the world, it also regurgitates it.)

The third pronominal mode is the "he" mode, the "representational." Here the actor's energies are bent on his becoming his character. He "acts out our ways of referring to the things of the world." It is up to the actor, as much as to the playwright, to innovate when we have become used to an image and don't really see it anymore. Such new images usually go too far, States points out, like the discovery of psychoanalysis in O'Neill's early plays. Then the innovative gives way to the conventional phase. "As an image becomes phenomenally weaker it becomes (for a time) significatively stronger," as, for example, in the Elizabethan theater of blood and gore.

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Eventually we arrive at the cliché stage, where the spectator "not only sees through the signifier but through the signified as well."

Appropriately, States wraps it all up with some delightful pages on the curtain call, that "decompression chamber halfway between the depths of art and the thin air of reality." It's not a clean break with the illusion: "The character remains in the actor, like a ghost." States writes charmingly about our romantic crush on the great actor, or on the myth of the great actor—our fascination with Olivier in *Hamlet* versus the real actor on the stage. And he talks about the "fiction of the modest actor," ostentatiously shy when face to face with the audience in the curtain call. Finally, the lights have gone up, and *Hamlet* was only a text, "on which one might practice this art of transcendental hypocrisy."

Great Reckonings in Little Rooms itself reckons insightfully with the theater in a little space, just over 200 pages. It is crammed with sudden revelations, new and surprising slants on the familiar, like for instance the following: "One might say that the characters explicate the setting in their dialogue as one explicates a painting—at the same time, of course, the setting is explicating character pictorially, much as a prison cell may be said to explicate a conversation taking place within it"—and the example is Hedda's progress through the areas and objects of her living room—sofa, fireplace, pistol case, finally the inner room where she takes her life—"a progress much like that of the medieval drama through the successive mansions, or stations, between Creation and Judgment." Not every idea is brand-new, but States has the style to make it fresh. It is a style glittering with witty aphorisms like "Art abhors an unused possibility as nature abhors a vacuum" or "In theater there is always a possibility that an act of sexual congress between two so-called signs will produce a real pregnancy." I have quoted enough, surely—too much, perhaps, for a short review, but when the style is this rich quotation is irresistible—to make it clear that this is a powerful, incisive book about the theater.

Or rather, about a certain kind of theater, by far the most prominent and familiar kind. With a few exceptions, States makes his points with plays everyone knows: *Hamlet*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Mother Courage*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and so on. But do not look in this book for any mention of Yeats's *The Death of Cuchulain* or even Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. They do not appear to be the kind of theater that interests this critic.

As for the controversy between semiotics and phenomenology, which does interest States and occupies a central place in his framework, this is no doubt of much importance to critics, but those who only love theater and not criticism will not care much about it; they will just enjoy this penetrating book by a man who is in love with theater. Perhaps it's my blind spot, but I can't help thinking that the phenomenological infrastructure isn't really important, that all that matters is that this is a fine mind viewing the play from a choice seat on the aisle.

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JAMES FINN COTTER

Poetry's Need to Name

POETRY'S NEED TO NAME MAY BE AS OLD AS ADAM or, if the poets are to be believed, as timeless as Orpheus. Shakespeare says that poets give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name, while Rilke tells us that things so cry out to be named that they are not themselves until a person names them. Poetry does more than name, of course, for it first expresses the poet's own mind and heart. The two functions, inner and outer, are not separate, however, since in naming the world poets discover and reveal themselves.

Gloucester, Massachusetts, is the place Charles Olson fashioned as the setting, source, and inspiration for the three volumes of poetry published between 1960 and 1975, printed together now as *The Maximus Poems*.[1] Lavishly produced in oversize format and meticulously edited by George F. Butterick, who has also written a scholarly guide to the sequence, the book is an omnium-gatherum of lyrics, ballads, journal notes, historical quotations, accounts of all kinds, crisscrossed and slanted lines, and whatever fragments the author felt like shoring against his ruins. Some fascinatingly detailed topographic maps of the North Shore area make places like Magnolia, Black Rock, Rocky Neck, Tenpound Island, Stage Head and Cashes Shoals come to life more than do Olson's words. "Cole's Island," for example, is a long-winded narrative about an encounter with death, so self-conscious in its rephrasings and interruptions that it distracts from its own drama and destroys its own tensions. The supposed persona of the poems, Maximus of Tyre, contributes nothing whatever to their unity or purpose. Even the author's self-parody sounds sophomoric, as in this aside in a poem dedicated to Robert Duncan:

> The which I do here record
> for eternity no less, lest it be lost that
> a mother is a hard thing to get away from.

The mock-pompous tone becomes pompous in turn when so little is being said. Olson is most effective when he abandons the maximum punch for the minimal statement, as in this report of a conversation:

[1] THE MAXIMUS POEMS, by *Charles Olson*. Edited by *George F. Butterick*. University of California Press. $35.00; $17.95.

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I told the woman
about the spring
on the other side of Freshwater
Cove which lies
right on the edge of the
marsh and is flooded
each high tide by
the Ocean which it then
expels it runs so fast itself
from its sources and to drink it
the moment the tide has pulled off even one little bit
is a water untasteable elsewhere.

The syntactical surprise of the last line springs from the art of pure talk and seems utterly believable, although nothing else in the poem sustains the slackness of the verse up to that point. Olson undoes the poetic deliberately; when he succeeds as he does here, the effect is pleasurable, but more often he is merely boringly undisciplined.

In a new collection of verse marked by inner control and a need to remember people and places,[2] Mark Jarman recalls his boyhood days in southern California, his schoolmates, their games, surfing, dancing, and cruising in cars. The landscape around Los Angeles then was more rural and life more elemental. "The Supremes" sets the scene:

In Ball's Market after surfing till noon,
we stand in wet trunks, shivering
as icing dissolves off our sweet rolls
inside the heat-blued counter oven,
when they appear on his portable TV,
riding a float of chiffon as frothy
as the peeling curl of a wave.

While the teenagers watch the Supremes on TV and wait for the hot sweet rolls, the image on the screen and that of the oven fuse, contrasting their heat with the shivering boys. Recently, the poet has seen the group's leader, Diana Ross, play a movie scene by the Pacific Ocean, and that image brings back the earlier one. The chiffon they wore then is compared to a curling wave, restoring the summer of waves and beach radios blaring Diana's voice. She must remember that summer too, Jarman conjectures, but differently. He and his friends, white and tanned, caught her song as momentarily as they rode the surf, and vanished. Now the market is gone, dredgers ruined the waves, and high-rises look down on the beach.

[2] FAR AND AWAY, by *Mark Jarman*. Carnegie-Mellon University Press. $14.95; $6.95.

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The final glimpse at the scene is from a plane with Ball heading for Las Vegas, the scene the poet himself views as he flies east. "The Supremes" sums up the plan of this coherently whole and wholesome book. The pivotal poem, "Lost in a Dream," in which the poet decides to leave "the L. A. canyon," echoes an equally compelling moment, with a dead cat to cremate, bees pelting his windowshield, and rock music beating from the car radio. Jarman crowds his life into these poems by letting each poem stand on its own. The method is both narrative and lyrical, mythic and personal; it embodies landscape and family memories in a single expression. Jarman names people and places, things and events, with convincing concreteness and mature reflection. In the end, places win out over persons, myth submerges memory, and the surge of time buries poetry:

> My parents—all of us—have come and gone and left
> no ghosts here, and that is our good fortune,
> to give it all to the ocean, the troubled sleeper.

These lines from "Cavafy in Redondo," the last in the collection, tell the whole story. Poems are fragmentary in the mind and only come to completion in leaving the poet to be read by others. Among the pleasures here are a father-daughter dialogue in "Poem in June," the suspenseful "Ballad of Larry and Club," and the love-sequence "Half Sonnets." Jarman also projects his vision by dramatizing it in other characters; "Two Rivers" looks at the past through the eyes and experiences of a whiskey-drinking rowboatman who faced changes and absences by flowing with the stream: "Flow / with the traffic. Follow it."

In "Dark All Afternoon" from his recent book of poems,[3] Stanley Plumly employs the theme of passing time figured in falling leaves, a theme as old as Homer but still reaffirmed by each autumn. He writes:

> The leaves are gold or gone, the sky
> blue beautiful with cloud, snow in the air
> or rain.

Although the poem describes his days in Boston, it also sums up his youth in small towns in Virginia and Ohio, places he has passed through and remembers. "Another November" pictures brush fire smoke and "the sun gold dollop going down." Here is an outdoor world where "the harvest is finished" and the time of day between work and supper comes "when the body / would lie down like bread" and is "wood for a fire." Plumly conjures up the past in

[3] SUMMER CELESTIAL, by *Stanley Plumly*. The Ecco Press. $13.50.

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"American Ash," recalling the tree-shaded street and house of his grandparents. He summons the memory of an outside light and indoor smells with telling detail and simplicity. Finding words for such scenes is an important part of this poet's consciousness. "What you need to name you save / by saying it out loud," he states in "Virginia Beach," a poem about his years of growing up by the sea and in the mountains. In many poems, people come alive again in speech, their own remembered talk and in the poet's words about them. "Promising the Air" opens: "A woman I loved talked in her sleep to children," and goes on to recall:

> I can remember waking myself up talking, saying nothing
> that mattered but loud enough for someone else to hear.
> No one was there. It was like coming alive, suddenly,
> in a body. I was afraid. . . .

This powerful sense of loneliness permeates these poems, as though the poet must write to make his life bearable. The danger here involves melodrama, which Plumly does not always avoid, as in the ending of this poem. He dedicates it to the woman described in the opening line: "This piece of a poem / is for her who wept without waking, who, word for word, / kept her promise to the air." Surely this gesture is too pat and self-serving. Most of the verse in this volume, the latest in the American Poetry Series, avoids such pitfalls. Plumly is a writer of strong convictions and sound intentions; his voice rises from inner necessities. "My Mother's Feet" takes it subject with seriousness and humor; "Blossom" and other poems accurately describe the experiences of early adolescence during World War II; "Waders and Swimmers" typifies an authentic feeling for birds, flowers, and landscape that defines a true poet's eye and ear. "Fifth & 94th" provides an excellent example of Plumly's gift for evoking a setting: here, for him, an unlikely bus ride in New York City:

> People are standing, as if out of the rain,
> holding on. For the last two blocks
> the woman across the aisle has wept
> quietly into her hands, the whole
> of her upper body nodding, keeping time.
> The bus is slow enough you can hear,
> inside your head, the traffic within
> traffic, like another talk.

Someone attempts to console her, but she has pulled herself together, tucking her legs up under her but not lifting her face. The poet then shifts his view:

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Across the park the winter sun is perfect
behind the grill-work of the trees,
as here it is brilliant against buildings.
Above her body the thousand windows blur.

Are there tears in the poet's own eyes? Perhaps even in the reader's as the "windows blur."

Many of the same concerns: childhood, country, fleeting time, and poetry, fill the pages of Galway Kinnell's first poetry collection[4] since his Pulitzer Prize *Selected Poems* in 1982. The title poem catches the ambiguities of trying to recapture the past by describing a return visit to a beach cottage where the poet had settled to write thirty-three years before. Coming back, he wanted everything to be the same, the sea spray, gulls, grass, coffee, bread, and oranges, but reaching the past is as physically easy as it is spiritually impossible when what was real then has changed or gone: "Mere comings, mere goings," like the waves slapping the shore "not in time / but in evanescence, a rhythmless medium." In a land of unlikeness, the poet searches for his own self-expression, as in these lines from "The Waking":

The true word, if it exists, exists *inside* the tongue
and from there must make *every* word, consciousness itself,
even all of forgetting, remember. . . .

Some of the best memories for Kinnell involve his son and daughter, rowing on a pond together or watching the stars. "The Frog Pond" observes the family from the author's viewpoint, then from an outsider's; it presents a striking framed picture of a scene from life. "The Seekonk Woods" starts off with a graphic memory of walking the train ties as a boy, and then switches to the present with echoes of Thoreau reinforcing the personal recollections. However, here Kinnell's tendency to overexplain takes over. As though the reader's own process of reflection cannot be trusted, the poet must meditate and expound upon the experience:

I have always intended to live forever,
but even more, to live now. The moment
I have done one or the other, I here swear,
I will come back from the living and enter
death everlasting: consciousness defeated.

Why swear at all? Why does the poet feel driven to prove himself to his readers; they already trust his sincerity. In two elegies to the

[4] THE PAST, by *Galway Kinnell.* Houghton Mifflin. $13.95; $5.95.

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poets Richard Hugo and James Wright, Kinnell seems intent on making mythology out of gossip; his hero-worship sounds too exaggerated, as if straining for the epic moment while only half-believing it himself. Mostly modest and honest in writing about himself, Kinnell suffers from an inflated image of his poet friends. His real ability lies in describing "what is": geese following the Connecticut River south, milkweed seeds soaring over a meadow, a piglet squirming in his arms, or a man splitting wood at daybreak; such scenes make for lively, involved reading. Here is "The Ferry Stopping at MacMahon's Point":

> It comes vigorously in,
> nudges the jetty and ties up,
> the usually ill-tossed line tossed twice,
> presses by engine pressure against
> the pilings for its half-minute passed
> in the young's leaps and the old's totters,
> backs out, turns, and prow lifted
> like the head of a swimming dog,
> makes for the Lavender Bay jetty.

Every word counts as efficiently as the ferry's docking and departure. Mark Twain would have approved the tradition and description.

In Robert Hayden's collected poems,[5] the poet's concerns about naming his period and place give a significance to his poetry, even though many of the concerns go back only ten or twenty years. Hayden voiced the themes of the sixties and early seventies: assassinations, racial equality, Vietnam, the space program. Even when he went beyond these subjects to write of ancient cultures and traditions, his poetry still sounds very much of its time and place. His most sweeping statements, as in "Words in the Mourning Time," now look most dated. It is embarrassing to be told: "We must go on struggling to be human, / though monsters of abstraction / police and threaten us." The sentiment remains truer than ever, but the statement is empty. "Frederick Douglass" still makes for fine pulpit oratory, but as a poem it succumbs to its own rhetoric. Hayden seems more memorable on occasions when he forgot the public voice and used his own—as in "Those Winter Sundays," for example, a deservedly anthologized poem. He gives us a much more convincing instance of prayer in the personal "Ice Storm" than in the verses that express the Bahai faith in a common worship of God, like "Full Moon" and " 'As My Blood Was Drawn.' " "The Ballad of Nat Turner" and other straightforward narratives handle didactic themes with more grace than the verses dedicated to Malcolm X, Dunbar, and Robeson. "The Tattooed Man" offers a fascinating al-

[5] COLLECTED POEMS, by *Robert Hayden*. Edited by Frederick Glaysher. Liveright. $14.95; $6.95.

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legory that is highly imaginative and suggestive without descending to its own obvious applications. In "The Islands" and "Kodachromes of the Island," the author also catches the ironies of being a middle-class American black vacationing among the poor natives of Jamaica. When his artistry becomes too deliberate, however, his imagery and language appear contrived to sound sincere and nonparochial, as if these qualities were virtues in themselves. When Hayden loses himself in his subject, the effect is totally different. "Free Fantasia: Tiger Flowers," for example, is a no-holds-barred tribute to a boxer which manages to retain the autobiographical and colloquial in its celebration of the past:

> I was a boy then, running
> (unbeknownst to Pa)
> errands for Miss Jackie
> and Stack-o'-Diamonds' Eula Mae.

The ladies' names alone tell the story. Even the poetic "unbeknownst" conceals the reality under an elegant word. The boxer's fancy nickname, "Tiger Flowers," calls up images of the painter Rousseau and an exotic dream-like jungle decorously introduced later in the poem.

The tone in Alan Dugan's collected poetry[6] is too often that of an angry man in the village pillory or of a private person forced to give a public reading. His work also smacks of period pieces of just a few decades ago, and he still poses as the iconoclast and rebel malcontent. What saves many poems is a fine sense of humor. "Religious Question" describes how his wife wakes crying for an angel to help her; she, an atheist, calls out for salvation. "Untitled Poem" dramatizes the frustration of waiting while fighting off the frustration. "What a Circus" develops the metaphor of the poet as contortionist with lively wit. "Love Song: I and Thou" employs an elaborate analogy to the author as a house under construction; it becomes too contrived but it works. "Teacher's Vacation Lament in the Country" describes all the mishaps that can spoil a vacation: a toothache and no dentist, poison ivy of the groin, sprained ankles, and going broke, but that is not the worst:

> What is decisively lousy is to be
> out of whiskey on Labor Day
> when the liquor stores are closed
> and the merchants fly the flag for blood,
> not solidarity, the labor movement, and stars,
> while having to go back to town to teach
> what, to whom, how, and why, on Tuesday.

[6] NEW AND COLLECTED POEMS, 1961–1983, by *Alan Dugan*. The Ecco Press. $17.50.

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Dugan no longer teaches.

Pablo Neruda's sequence of twenty-four poems about a visit to Easter Island in 1971 has been translated by William O'Daly and published in a bilingual edition.[7] The poems, alternating between "The Men" and "The Island," contrast modern man's indifference, competitiveness, alienation, and guilt with the native genius that raised the stone figures in a spirit of cooperation, creativity, and religious awe. The poet finds himself caught between the two worlds, past and present, oceanic and urbanized, permanent and transient. Neruda, who knew he was dying of cancer at the time, never forgets that he is a tourist and visitor, yet he yearns to absorb the reality of the island and to be reborn. At the midpoint of the sequence, he glows "with new radiance":

> I want to touch, to know Oceania,
> stone and wind, to build and build again,
> to court on my knees the chastity of the sun,
> to dig out my destiny with poor bloody hands.

Disillusioned and ill, the poet found in the natural setting and mysterious statues a testament of lasting hope. Just as wind and water formed the island, the human spirit shaped these monuments of "moral radiance," "purity," and "truth." Some of the names he gives to the island ring with the beauty of a litany: "separate rose," "natural star, green diadem," "tower of light," and "navel of gold." However, when Neruda depicts his fellow tourists and the cities from which they come, he descends to name-calling; his presentation of contemporary life is utterly bleak and negative, unrelieved even by irony. Today's pilgrims "murdered / the five-masted ships" and arrive "in enormous aluminum geese, / seated correctly, drinking sour cocktails." The poet breaks away from the other travelers on the island to undergo his mystical transformation, but in the end he returns with them, a man "of our mournful professions and occupations." The pilgrim can only hope that the great sea will protect Easter Island "from our barren brutality." Nevertheless, the journey has been taken and has made a difference, at least to the poet:

> We went a long way, a long way
> to understand the orbits of stone,
> the extinguished eyes still gazing out,
> the gigantic faces ready to enter eternity.
> (XIII)

O'Daly has written an informative introduction on the history of Easter Island and the men who played a part in its discovery. He also explains its importance to Neruda and how the poem, pub-

[7] THE SEPARATE ROSE, by *Pablo Neruda*. Translated by *William O'Daly*. Cooper Canyon Press. $8.00p.

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lished posthumously, distills his lifelong themes and concerns. The translation is clear, readable, and mostly accurate. The final lines miss the point, however, and fail to key the reader into an essential theme that Neruda has woven into the original:

> *cien miradas de piedra que miran hacia adentro*
> *y hacia la eternidad del horizonte.*

The translation reads:

> a hundred stone faces who gaze within
> and forever, into the horizon.

The force of the preposition *hacia* ("towards"), repeated here and throughout the sequence, has been ignored. And the final line misses the meaning and loses the grand scale of Neruda's original verse which echoes "eternity" from earlier on in section XIII, quoted above, and the thrust of the journey beyond time and into a further horizon. Finally, "The Men" has none of the resonance of "Los Hombres," but that is unavoidable and the reason bilingual texts are helpful.

In her third poetry collection,[8] Paula Rankin is literally haunted by the past, from the title poem, "To the House Ghost," to the unforgettable figures of dead relatives and friends who flit through the lines of her verse like phantoms and furies. The poet waits, "letting whatever wants to blow through me / resume its nettling exhalations." Her grandmother, mother, and daughter reappear often as fleeting representatives of love and concern. The author is a worrier, but she writes in a breezy, straightforward style about her obsessions. "Making Tracks," for example, begins:

> I'm leaving again,
> passing through the gate by the cows
> heading down the dirt road
> with my arms thrown open to air:
> I've had such trouble breathing.

She will live in a tent outside the house which she pretends suffers and weeps with her: "Goodbye to acquiescence, / that pale ghost that lets dust settle / like slipcovers over bodies." But the ghost of a child enters the picture and draws her home again. Absence and flight play an important part in these poems, like the friend the poet keeps missing at the airport or another who killed himself with a gun, perhaps a suicide. Some poems seem allusive and only become clear by references in other poems about the same people and situations. "Poem Using Unused Lines" offers a clever recapitulation of previous subjects and statements. "Being Refused Local

[8] TO THE HOUSE GHOST, by *Paula Rankin*. Carnegie-Mellon University Press. $14.95; $6.95.

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Credit" provides a humorous account of still having to pay cash after living twenty years in a town: "Suddenly we don't need / almost everything." It is as if one has not existed for others in the past and does not exist to oneself in the present. The multiple use of negatives makes up an elaborate pattern, fitting in neatly with the ever-absent, ever-present ghost. Some unfortunate typos distract the reader along the way: "desparate," "exercize," "belive," and "judgement." "We Never Get to the End of it All," as the title of the first poem informs us, but in spite of some slips and tumbles, we manage to keep on moving. And as the title poem reminds us, even the dead remain restless:

> Just because I turn on the light
> it doesn't mean I don't want you around.
> I know how you like to keep your own
> shredded space among hangers and vents;
> you think I have no room for you
> at the table or in bed. But listen:
> I have made room in my ribcage more than once.
> There is always something that wants to move over
> to borrow air like trouble.

The skeleton in the closet walks in the sinews of the living. The poet speaks the names for those who have gone ahead.

William Hathaway cuts a sharp profile of himself in his latest collection of verse;[9] he is a man who relates to animals by watching, fishing, horseback riding, walking, and to people by suffering and love. He frankly admits that living with a wife and children requires greater knowledge and self-control than he can at times summon up. "Horse Sense" recounts how his kids feared the horses he loves and felt revolted by his cleaning a fish, while "Grown Quiet at the Name of Love" and "Silent Treatment" subtly depict moments of estrangement in his marriage. His own memories of boyhood possess a realism that is sure and unsentimental. "The Iceball," which opens the book on firmly autobiographical ground, tells about a snowball so perfect that the narrator chose not to throw it at his enemy but to keep it safe in a freezer:

> This bomb was too beautiful: ball-
> bearing round, smoother than a crystal
> globe, of heft so perfect my arm *knew*
> it could not miss, but could not let it go.

When he took the iceball out of the freezer, he found it shrunk and smelling of stale food. The poem sums up the frustration of putting beauty before action and our human inability to preserve anything for long. Like the iceball, the poem also abandons its maker and

[9] FISH, FLESH, & FOWL, by *William Hathaway*. Louisiana State University Press. $13.95; $6.95.

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takes on its own perishable existence. "Tardiness Lecture" is addressed to Hathaway's son and dramatically recalls a teacher's punishment for the author's coming late to class, a cruel and unfair act that still stirs rebellion in his heart. But the poem ends with a bitter lesson to the son: "you had best obey, my boy—or else." "Late and Early Geese" deflates all the odes written to birds as symbols of immortal longings. The first lines sound an appropriately accurate note:

> More often they pass over as ragged checkmarks
> than those balanced vees of tradition.

The poem then wanders off to Sergeant Alvin York fighting the Huns and Gary Cooper who "did a bang-up job playing him." Hathaway trivializes the theme only to return to the geese at the end. Although he knew their circling "didn't mean a thing, / beyond a second look," he still knew "it meant no good." When Hathaway exercises this inner stream of consciousness in his verse, as he does in poems on horses, fish, crabs, cats, squirrels, and birds, he fascinates with his original responses; he is engaging, humorous, surprising, and entertaining in his unpredictable observations. When he extends this method and approach to literary subjects with poems on Gertrude Stein, Picasso, and Matisse, he seems too artsy-craftsy and too clever for his own good. In "You Had to Know Her," for example, he mimics Hemingway's style in responding to Stein's criticism, inserting his own voice into the discussion. Such parodies may work in creative writing classes, but they call into question the author's creation of his own style for what he needs to name. "What Springs to Life," the final poem, sets things back on the right track; it is colloquial, unassuming, yet poignant in its nostalgia for what was best in the late fifties: Martin Luther King, *The Seventh Seal*, a friend with whom to "talk some about the truth instead / of just cars and we sang folk songs." A true persona speaks through these lines, a man worth reading for his heartfelt openness to nature and his honest presentation of himself.

In the title sequence, "Alternate Means of Transport," of her new book of poems,[10] Cynthia Macdonald has written a work that is part *Waste Land* and part *Four Quartets*. Mingling memory and desire, she presents a world of chaos in the image of hats: hats blowing in the wind, hat tricks, basins as hats, hats in the belfry, hats as halos, yarmulkes, the dome of heaven and trumpet mutes for the Day of Judgment. Her cast of characters include a museum curator, an ice-skating Jew, a hatmaker, a church organist, and a man with a butterfly net. These figures appear and disappear in theatrical scenes set indoors and out, on lawns, in galleries, choir lofts, shops and streets, until at last: "The people are gone. / Only the hats remain (reminding us / Of man's capacity for destruction)." The author,

[10] ALTERNATE MEANS OF TRANSPORT, by *Cynthia Macdonald*. Knopf. $14.95; $7.95.

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well aware that hats are no longer in fashion, by the naming of hats preserves their identities; the sequence begins:

> Hats blow away, sailing, swirling over
> The bright green lawn—mostly straws: boaters, panamas,
> The pale, large-brimmed ladies' versions, sailors,
> Streamers and ribands fluttering like kite tails. . . .

Hats represent the cosmos, male and female, children and adults, and different nationalities according to the country of their making, "Tuscan" or "Irish" straw. They include: "A few cloches for those who like to wear / Their halos pulled down over their ears." Bell-shaped hats worn by women earlier in the century, "cloches" recall not only a style now abandoned but bells, "halos," and hats worn in church. Even most nuns have given up the wimples that identified their orders; top hats, beavers, tams, and mob caps have blown into the past. The poet suitably employs an analogy of weaving and making, fusing this art with those of music and painting. Allusions to Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton are worked into the tapestry, and historical personages loom in the lines. Is the man with the butterfly net Nabokov? The organist Bach? The curator Kenneth Clark? The Jew the author's great-grandfather who changed his name from Levy to Lee? Whatever meaning the past conceals and reveals in its glass darkly, the journey today is verbal, not visionary, as the poem's final lines remind us: "Poems lavish with the language of light wing through a time when / We are in the dark." We are "illuminated by static" rather than ecstatic love, by its *synthetic* appeal. Our plainsong is a plaint: "It is, perhaps, what we have left." The theme occurs in the remaining two sections of poems. "Those Who Live Alone" are no longer contemplatives but lonely recluses. "Apartments on First Avenue" are proposed above-ground cemeteries, "marble skyscrapers" that "point in the right direction." "By the Sea" and "My Familiar Lover," personal, sensual love poems, sound a Donne-like note of irony and defiance, while "Hymn in a Bed of Amherst" nicely spoofs Emily Dickinson with aphorisms and dashes. "Letter to Richard from Budapest," unlike poems disguising themselves as letters, really does correspond with casual wit and free associations. Some poems, like "The Four Virginias," suffer from too much allusiveness and verbosity. At times, mystification replaces mysticism, and the mystery becomes a whodunit rather than a reason for wonder. Poetry is "an alternate means of transport," but all true transport leads to one transcendence. Ms. Macdonald communicates a pure delight in language, but then often backs off, uncommitted and unconvinced by her own power to name what cannot be named except by metaphor.

D. J. Enright is concerned with the truth of biography in his latest poetry collection.[11] Since the subtitle of his book is "A Life," that

[11] INSTANT CHRONICLES: A LIFE, by *D. R. Enright*. Oxford University Press. $6.95p.

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concern itself is autobiographical. He begins with a translation of Heine's "Lives of the Poets," a romantic celebration of poets in their poetry, who are "present in the radiance of their works" like stars or diamonds, but whose lives, worm-like in the mud of ordinary daylight, should not be scanned at such close quarters. In a prose note to the poem, Enright wonders why Heine believes "only a nameless pity" keeps us from crushing the worm underfoot: "What can he mean by nameless pity? It's a pitiful biographer who fails to come up with a name." In "The biographical mode," Enright argues that biographers grow angry when their subjects burn letters, but more may be learned from the burning than from the letters. Faced with a page in cipher in "Naming names," the biographer may indulge in exotic conjectures, but more likely the list gives the names of women his subject slept with. The whole problem of finding the right name is summed up in "Watching one's words" where "homosexuality" and "homoeroticism" are defined, only to conclude that the less accurate word has become preferable to the more accurate one, a reflection on today's confusion about names. Freud accused Goethe of using words for self-concealment; Enright replies: "What a lot of self to conceal!" ("Short thoughts"). Goethe left nature and love to the specialist and often called on God "though not expecting an answer." Enright observes that we once could rely on posterity to read and make judgments, but today the readers are themselves writers. For the "Old Reviewer," "The whole of knowledge resides in words," and he "slept with Roget underneath his pillow." Another poem, "Cross words," points out that definitions have replaced literature: "Semiotics: more signs and portents," "Hermeneutics: an interpreter is called for," and "Deconstruction: books remaindered, books burned." The author himself, present throughout in the third person, provides the reader with biographical material which is personal and poetic; we learn of his teaching in England and Egypt, writing his thesis on "The Search for God," traveling and lecturing in Japan, China, and the Orient. He contrasts his own whimsical individuality with the set ways of bureaucracy. Enright's saving grace is his sense of humor. If he is more concerned with the ridiculous than the sublime, so he finds the world. He writes wittily about aging and wisely about death. In "Last things," he reflects that one can at least hope to die with the sound of truth in one's ear, even if it takes the form of a cliché: "The worst is over and you'll soon feel much better." The author comments: "This is the body's hour. The soul, wherever situated at the moment, has all eternity before it. . . . They were closer, over the years, than was supposed." We can still learn about living and dying from writers, reading their work and knowing their biographies. They name the same world we all inhabit and leave behind. In the last poem, "Ever-rolling," the poet, having shared his "instant chronicles" with his readers, turns the story over to them: "It's your turn now."

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DAVID EHRENFELD

Father by Daughter: The Life of E.F. Schumacher

IT MUST BE A JOY TO WRITE A BIOGRAPHY of someone who has held strong convictions since youth—and has gotten them all into letters, articles and books.[1] E.F. Schumacher, the German-born economist, began to express himself fully and frankly on every conceivable subject while still in his teens. In 1929, at age seventeen, he was already sufficiently outspoken to be invited by John Maynard Keynes to participate in his exclusive Cambridge seminars; a year later he became one of two German Rhodes scholars at Oxford. Consistently throughout a life marked by intellectual turnings and paradox he remained one of the most self-confident men in Europe, always convinced, as were those who knew him, of the utter supremacy of his own genius. Whether he was an agricultural laborer in Northamptonshire, or confined to an enemy alien internment camp on the Shropshire-Wales border, or writing for the BBC, or a member of the American Bombing Survey of occupied Germany, or the Chief Economist for the British Coal Board, or the guru of the small is beautiful-intermediate technology movement, he made his opinions known in the world of influence and power.

And what uncompromising opinions they were. Here are some of the early ones.

Anti-English. He wrote to his father after his first bleak Christmas in England:

> These English, whatever clan they are from, are, according to our conceptions, incredible ignoramuses. I have met heaps of Lords and Ladies who haven't got the faintest idea about anything . . . Most people are "frightfully nice" and that's about it.

Anti-Semitic. In a New College debate in his freshman year he defended the motion that "This House believes that England needs a Hitler," in the process making what his biographer describes as "regrettable remarks" about Jews.

Theoretical and anti-empirical. While lecturing at the Columbia University School of Banking, in New York in 1934, he wrote:

[1] E.F. SCHUMACHER: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT, by *Barbara Wood*. Harper & Row. $19.50.

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> The empirical approach has broken down—not because it could not collect a sufficient number of facts, but because facts have to be interpreted and understood. . . .

Morally relativistic. In the words of his biographer, Barbara Wood:

> Fritz believed that morality was an historical product which, as any other human law, could be altered if it became inconvenient or no longer appropriate for the society in which it had evolved. He further held that as man was the product of his inherited character and environment he could not be held responsible for his behaviour and one could not hate him for what he did.

Anti-Christian and atheistic. From a letter to Werner von Simson, in 1942:

> My criticism of Christianity . . . is not merely that its doctrines include the most terrible and savage superstitions of a barbarous age, (the whole doctrine of Atonement, the slaying of a God, the eating of a God . . .), but that as a moral code, it is totally insufficient, self-contradictory, and out of date . . .

Later in this same letter he characterized himself as the "anti-metaphysician par excellence," aligning himself totally with the then-prevailing Oxford style of scientific rationalism.

Anti-small-scale enterprise. Also in 1942, in a set of lecture notes he recorded that "as a businessman" he was

> —impressed by the achievements of large-scale industry—'semi-monopolies'
> —impressed by the waste and inefficiency in highly competitive small-scale enterprise

At this time, according to Wood, he was fully supportive "of state planning, large-scale state monopolies, mass production and standardization."

Certainly those familiar with E.F. Schumacher's major works, *Small is Beautiful*[2] and *A Guide for the Perplexed*,[3] will wonder by now if I am writing about the same Schumacher. I am. All of the opinions and attitudes that have been listed so far were early ones and all were reversed—some sooner than others—by the time Schumacher had reached middle age.

[2] SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL: ECONOMICS AS IF PEOPLE MATTERED, by *E.F. Schumacher*. Harper & Row. $3.95p.

[3] A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED, by *E.F. Schumacher*. Harper & Row. $4.95p.

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Perhaps the first to go was Fritz's anti-Semitism, which had not been more than casual. In 1935, he resigned from one of the most exclusive clubs in Berlin because of its growing sentiment against its non-Aryan members. At this time, an economic syndicate of which he was a member was helping many Jews remove their assets (and themselves) from Germany. The political climate was hardly propitious for such acts; his future brother-in-law, the physicist and later Nobel Laureate Werner Heisenberg, lost his job for merely defending the scientific validity of Einstein's theories. By 1937, Fritz was in London, straining the meager assets he needed to support a wife and little son, Christian (!), by taking on the financial responsibility for a Jewish refugee.

One by one all the other early dogmas fell by the wayside. The "anti-metaphysician" became an Eastern mystic—immersed in the wonders of Buddhism, then an organic gardener, committed as an act of faith to the holistic philosophy of which organic gardening is a part. In 1971, still a Buddhist, he was received into the Catholic Church by his local parish priest, Father Scarborough. The only witnesses as he recited the Creed and took Communion were his second wife, Vreni, his oldest daughter and her husband, all converts like himself. He had feared that his elderly mother, a Protestant, would be distressed when she heard the news, but she took it in stride, remarking, "Nothing can surprise me anymore with Fritz."

Of the other conversions from early beliefs less needs to be said. Schumacher's teachings about the dangers of gigantism and standardization, the necessity of an empirical approach to economics, and the absolute and unchanging moral significance of human work have become central tenets of the emerging world view that characterizes the last quarter of this century and sets it apart philosophically from what came before. Of course not everything about Fritz Schumacher changed during his lifetime. He remained an egotist until his death, supremely confident of his own intellectual powers and insensitive to the human needs of those closest to him. Perhaps paradoxically, he also remained a practitioner of Will Rogers' personal creed: "I never met a man I didn't like." If Barbara Wood is to be believed—and I think she is—the number of people that Schumacher couldn't get along with during a lifetime filled with action, with outspoken beliefs and with intellectual controversy could be counted on the fingers of one hand. And finally, he remained committed, one way or another from the beginning of his career until the end, to the goal of eradicating poverty and its attendant ills.

All of this would make a challenge to any biographer. Despite the joy—alluded to in the first paragraph—of having a subject who recorded so many feelings and beliefs on paper, the task of following the linguistic, cultural and physical changes and intellectual, politi-

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cal and spiritual metamorphoses of a life like that of E.F. Schumacher, spanning the most complex period of world history and with its subject always at the very center of the maelstrom, would seem overwhelming. Few would undertake it. The one who did, Barbara Wood, a graduate in economics and history from Bristol University, housewife and mother of six, is the third of E.F. Schumacher's eight children, the first of his four daughters. She has done a superb job.

For the first three-fourths of the book, until it is appropriate for her to notice her own presence in his life, it is hard to remember that Schumacher's biographer is also his daughter. Granted there is real affection and respect shown by her for the subject—it is manifest on nearly every page. But it appears no different in quality than, for example, the affection and respect for William the Silent implicit in the writing of his biographer, C.V. Wedgwood. There is also brutal honesty in Wood's account of her father, honesty about things that are trivial as well as matters that are more serious. First the trivial:

> Even more annoying was his sudden habit of name-dropping. At every mention of a name in the headlines he would casually remark, "Oh, look at this, he used to be a friend of mine," or "I knew him well during the war. . . . Oh look at this picture of Harold Wilson: I remember when I met him at New College in the Senior Common Room where he was a don. Just a young fellow. He came to me and said he was going to give it up and go into politics."

Wood speculates that such claims of acquaintance were often greatly exaggerated.

In a more serious vein is the telling of Schumacher's relationship with his first wife, Muschi Petersen, Wood's mother. Although it was a loving marriage until Muschi's death, there were, for her, terrible problems.

> Muschi was the antithesis of his ideal of a clear thinker. She did not so much think as feel. She could not understand most of what Fritz told her but she knew that it was brilliant. . . . She only had her instincts to go by, she could only follow the dictates of her heart and as her heart belonged to him, he possessed her whole personality. . . . Her role appeared to her to be that of a provider of comfort and support to Fritz so that he could carry out his great work with as little hindrance as possible, and she did it with as much devotion and commitment as she gave to securing the happiness of her children.

The original foundations of Muschi's strength had been her love of

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her family in Germany, and her Christian belief. Fritz's move to England destroyed her close contact with the Petersens, a distinguished Hamburg family (her father was Lord Mayor), which despite some Jewish blood and the fact that Muschi's mother would not allow the Nazi flag to be raised over her house while she was in it, somehow survived the war fairly intact. All that was left for Muschi in England, except for Fritz and the children, was her Christianity, and Fritz soon took care of that. The result was a feeling of devastating loss, pain, and inadequacy, to all of which Fritz was oblivious. Wood describes this with sympathy and remarkable detachment. This part of the story of Schumacher's life offers her the greatest test as a biographer-daughter and proves her to be a model of insight and balance uncomplicated by neurosis. What emerges is a book that has some of the best features of biography and autobiography in rare juxtaposition.

A year after Muschi's death from cancer in 1960, Fritz married his Swiss *au pair*, Vreni Rosenberger, who was thirty years his junior and who was to give birth, in due time, to another four Schumacher children. As usual, the emotional problems of the transition period before and immediately after the marriage to Vreni were not understood by Fritz; most of them concerned his oldest daughter, Barbara, who had been very close to her mother. She writes about this with grace and even with humor. For example, when the period of mourning was over, Fritz, a handsome and famous widower, was besieged by candidates for marriage.

> We loathed most the ones who tried to get at him through us. One had an enormous bosom and embraced us constantly. We thought the sensation of enveloping darkness must be like drowning. Eventually Virginia, aged nine, said "If she does that again I'll punch her in the stomach." She went straight to the drawing room and stood affectionately near to her prey. I watched with glee, wishing I had the courage to do the same.

Although relations between Muschi's four children and Vreni and her four children have not been entirely smooth since Schumacher's death, it is irrelevant to the story of his life, and no hint of rancor creeps into the book. As far as an outsider can tell, Wood's description of her stepmother, Vreni, is sensitive, loving, and fair. Nowhere is this more apparent than in her brief discussion of the fact that both of Schumacher's wives developed cancer (Vreni's fortunately was operable). After recounting Fritz's mystical belief that the cause was the presence of two subterranean water courses deep below the house, she continues:

> Other explanations have been offered which may be as farfetched (or as true) as the water courses. One is that in both cases the cancer was a form of unconscious protest at a relationship

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> which demanded, by and large, a complete surrender to Fritz's drive and goals in life. Selfless devotion to Fritz's cause ruled out any kind of more obvious self-fulfilment. Muschi and Vreni suffered, not because they were thwarted or frustrated in following a much desired career or goal of their own, but because Fritz's brilliance cast a shadow over their own self-esteem and self-confidence.

As personal biography, Wood's life of her father is an unqualified success—as intellectual biography it is also a success, but not an unqualified one. In the latter case, its strength lies in the way the author traces the evolution of Schumacher's thoughts, no mean feat considering the tortuous path this evolution followed. For this alone the book would have been worth its all too modern price. However, the view we get of E.F. Schumacher's intellectual landscape is through a lens that has minimized, flattened out, the peaks and valleys. There has been no effort to identify and separate out the most unique and lasting of Schumacher's ideas, to show their interrelationships and put them in the context of their times in a way that might explain their enormous and still growing impact upon the world.

I can think of three of Schumacher's contributions that merit this distinction: they can all be found, among other places, in *Small is Beautiful.* The first gave title to the book; it is that there is an appropriate magnitude to each economic activity and technological endeavor, and biggest is rarely best. Second is the notion, absent from the calculus of conventional economics, that the opportunity to perform good work is absolutely necessary for human health and well-being and for the proper functioning of any social system; there is no such thing as a "healthy level of unemployment." And third is the concept of intermediate technology, a technology whose equipment cost per workplace is intermediate between that of the typical labor-saving large-scale factory and the "£1-technology" of most poor countries. Intermediate technology must be largely rural and decentralized, cheap enough to give hope of eventual self-employment to any competent worker, relatively simple in its methods of production, organization and financing, and reliant mainly on local raw materials and local use of finished products.

True, not one of these ideas is completely original, although intermediate technology comes closest to the mark. For example, in 1957, years before the publication of *Small is Beautiful* or any of the essays upon which it was based, Leopold Kohr wrote in *The Breakdown of Nations*:

> . . . bigness, or oversize, is really much more than just a social problem. It appears to be the one and only problem permeating all creation. Wherever something is wrong, something is too big.

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Schumacher, himself, is said to have remarked that Kohr is the person who taught him more than anyone else. Yet for all of this, it was Schumacher who brought forth these thoughts when their time had come, and clothed them with words in a way that made the world take notice.

Of course these are not the only ideas that Schumacher put forth. His essay on the limitations of forecasting and planning, reprinted in *Small is Beautiful*, has still not had the impact on modern economics that it deserves. The economics of permanence and non-violence are two more themes that Schumacher explored in his lectures and writings. And the central message of *A Guide for the Perplexed* is the statement, transcending economics, that human ingenuity, by itself, is not sufficient to sustain life:

> Man closed the gates of Heaven against himself and tried, with immense energy and ingenuity, to confine himself to the Earth. He is now discovering . . . that a refusal to reach for Heaven means an involuntary descent into Hell. . . . *The modern experiment to live without religion has failed*, and once we have understood this, we know what our "post-modern" tasks really are.

But unlike the three ideas I mentioned first, these latter principles have all had champions who are at least the equal of Schumacher: Lewis Mumford on forecasting and prophecy, Gandhi on non-violence, C.S. Lewis and Abraham Joshua Heschel on the danger of neglecting Heaven in the affairs of Earth—and others.

So what I would like to have seen in a biography of the life and thought of E.F. Schumacher is a better description of the special themes that assure him a prominent place in the history of ideas. Perhaps this is one instance where closeness to the subject has worked against the biographer, allowing details to obscure part of the larger pattern.

Nevertheless, in spite of the criticism this is a very good biography indeed—fascinating and well-written in addition to the other virtues I mentioned. The reader who is at all familiar with Schumacher's works will have no trouble putting Barbara Wood's narrative in a broader intellectual perspective. All in all, we can thank an extraordinary daughter for so effectively sharing her knowledge of an extraordinary father.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Author of *The Poetry of W. H. Auden, Dionysus and the City* and *The Levitator and Other Poems,* MONROE K. SPEARS is Moody Professor of English at Rice University. He has completed a collection of prose essays called *American Ambitions,* in which the William James essay will appear. . . . BERT O. STATES writes mainly about the drama and theatre. His most recent book, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater,* is reviewed in this issue. As to his interest in dreams, Mr. States makes the following comments: "My fascination with the dream began years ago when it occurred to me that I am asleep one-third of my life and I spend a third of that third in another world that is at least as real as this one—if you define reality as whatever you believe you are *in.* Writing about the dream is a kind of homesickness: there is a need to substantiate the dream world, which you can never touch or share. Certainly you can't explain it, so you try to approximate its effects. But the next dream shows you something you have overlooked. . . . The dream has been too much in the hands of the scientists. They're very good at what they do, but they're not interested in the dream as much as in the dream function. What we need, really, is another Gaston Bachelard who is both a scientist and a poet. . . . My ideal is to be able to slip into the dream with a note pad, possibly a camera (or at least a clear eye for detail), with all my waking faculties intact, to spy on it, to force its secret, and then get back out with the treasure, like the great white hunter. Unfortunately, you have to leave all these things at the door."

ROBERT TAYLOR, JR.,* a native of Oklahoma, has lived in Pennsylvania for the past thirteen years, where he teaches at Bucknell University. In 1984 he published his outlaw book, *Loving Belle Starr,* and in 1985 a novel, *Fiddle and Bow,* appeared (both from Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill). Twice a recipient of fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, he spent a month of his recent sabbatical leave at Ragdale, where he began work on a new novel. He is co-editor of the literary journal *West Branch* and co-director of the annual Bucknell Poetry Festival. . . . LOUIS SIMPSON's most recent books of poetry are *People Live Here: Selected Poems 1949–1983* (BOA Editions) and *The Best Hour of the Night* (Ticknor and Fields). He has two books scheduled for publication in the spring of 1986: *An Introduction to Poetry,* third edition (St. Martin's Press) and *The Character of the Poet,* a collection of essays, reviews, and interviews (University of Michigan Press). He says that the most important news he has to report is his marriage to Miriam,

**Asterisk indicates a new contributor.*

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this past June. Beginning in June, 1986, he will be on leave from Stony Brook. He and Miriam plan to do some travelling, and he will be working toward the completion of a new book of poems. . . . The University of Keele (England) has recently begun to put all of CHARLES TOMLINSON's poems on tape, read by the author, and have issued commercially two cassettes of him reading. His *Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press) appeared in 1985, along with a volume of his graphics, *Eden* (Redcliffe Press, Bristol). Another of his frequent visits to the U.S. will occur this May when the University of New Mexico confers on him an honorary degree. He will be back in September as Lamont Professor at Union College, Schenectady.

DICK ALLEN's* third book of poetry, *Overnight in the Guest House of the Mystic* (L.S.U. Press), was a National Book Critics Circle Award Nominee for 1984. He received a 1984–85 National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Writing Grant and in the spring of 1985 read on the Ohio Poetry Circuit. He is currently the Charles A. Dana Professor of Literature and Director of Creative Writing at the University of Bridgeport. Allen's other poetry volumes are *Anon and Various Time Machine Poems* (Delacorte and Delta) and *Regions With No Proper Names* (St. Martin's Press); he has edited or co-edited three text-anthologies of genre literature for Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: *Science Fiction: The Future*; *Looking Ahead: The Vision of Science Fiction*, and *Detective Fiction: Crime and Compromise*. Currently, Allen is completing two new collections of his poems: *Flight & Pursuit* and *The Space Sonnets*, as well as compiling several poetry anthologies. He lives in a small pink Cape Cod with his family, near Thrushwood Lake, in Trumbull, Connecticut. For the past twelve years he has spent what spare time he has studying the new physics and the new astronomy and Oriental religion, in addition to amassing an extensive collection of modern and contemporary British and American poetry. He was raised in Round Lake, New York—a small town in the foothills of the Adirondacks where many of his recent poems are based.

JAYANTA MAHAPATRA has two books of poetry forthcoming in 1986: *Burden of Waves & Fruit* (Three Continents Press, Washington, D.C.) and *The 1984 Poems* (Nirala Publications, New Delhi/Jaipur). In August and September, 1985, he visited the U.S.S.R. for three weeks as Indo-Soviet Cultural Exchange Writer, and met and talked with Soviet poets and writers. He has recently been awarded a residency and travel grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to spend five weeks at the Bellagio Study & Conference Center, Italy. Here, he will be working on a long poem tentatively entitled "Temple." . . . Educated at Black Mountain College and the New School for Social Research, JANE MAYHALL has in recent years revisited several schools and colleges as guest lecturer and as instructor. Her stories and poems have appeared in many periodicals and anthologies. She is presently at work on a new volume of poems and sto-

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ries. . . . HILARY DAVIES* was born in 1954 in London, of Anglo-Welsh parentage. She read French and German at Oxford University, England, and lived for two years in Paris where she taught English as a foreign language. She has had a variety of occupations—schoolteacher, translator, university lecturer, filing clerk, bookshop assistant. Was recipient of the Eric Gregory award for poets under thirty in 1983, and prizewinner in the Oxford poetry competition 1983/85. Has travelled widely: France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Canton, U.S., Canada and most recently Moscow. . . . RICHARD GROSSMAN,* a resident of Minneapolis, is the author of two books of poetry, *Tycoon Boy* and *The Animals*. He is President of The Museum Fund, a national art consulting organization.

MARCIA B. SIEGEL gave four lectures on How Classicism Evolves at the Tanz 86 Festival in Vienna during the week of March 17. . . . JILL DOLAN is currently the managing editor of *Theatre Crafts Magazine*. She is co-editor, with Brooks McNamara, of *The Drama Review: An Anthology, 1955–1985*, a retrospective collection of articles to be published by UMI Research Press in 1986. She is also at work on her own collection of essays on feminist performance criticism. . . . ROBERT LEITER, an editor, short story writer and teacher, lives in Philadelphia with his wife and three children. He is at work on a novel. . . . GEORGE KEARNS, regularly on the faculty of Rutgers University, is spending the spring and summer in Scotland as Visiting Lecturer at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. . . . JAMES FINN COTTER, author of *Inscape*, is writing a second book on Hopkins while on sabbatical leave this spring from Mount Saint Mary College. He has completed a translation of *The Divine Comedy*; the last four cantos of *Paradiso* appeared in the summer issue of *The Italian Quarterly*. . . . HARRY GOLDGAR is a lawyer in New Orleans. A former professor of English and comparative literature, he has been book editor at the Nashville *Tennessean* and was an editorial writer for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*.

DAVID EHRENFELD is professor of biology at Rutgers University. He did his undergraduate work in History at Harvard, and received an M.D. from Harvard Medical School and a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Florida. His research concerns the biology and conservation of sea turtles, and his teaching has mostly been in the area of ecology. He has written a number of books including *The Arrogance of Humanism*, an examination of prevailing beliefs about human control over nature, and is co-author, with C. K. Mack, of a science fiction novel, *The Chameleon Variant*, about genetic engineering and its potential use in undercover operations. He is a founder and director of the E. F. Schumacher Society (U.S.), which was formed to promote the ideas of the late economist. Recently, he has been serving on an advisory panel of the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment which is preparing a report for Congress

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on the global loss of biological diversity and its significance. . . . DERWENT MAY is the literary editor of the BBC weekly, *The Listener*. His book *Hannah Arendt*, in the new Penguin-Viking series *Lives of Modern Women*, will be published in May. . . . First published by *The Hudson Review* in 1980, KRISTOPHER JOHNSON has, under a pseudonym, since published fiction and poetry in Australia, New Zealand, England, Holland, West Germany, Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea. He has won an Academy of American Poets Prize and Australia's Red Earth Poetry Prize for 1985. He lives in Melbourne.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

When we Americans read (usually under duress) about such ancestors as Cotton Mather, the fear arises in our breasts that we may be like that: provincially insecure, insatiably ambitious, self–righteous, humorless, ruthlessly determined to be "first," in heaven as on earth. But when we read about William James, we feel that this is the kind of person we hope that we are: modest, unpretentious, a genuine democrat, spiritually as well as politically, always warm and generous to others, candid and honest, and at the same time fearless, absolutely independent, hard-working, and productive. As admired ancestor, regarded with pride and affection, he is a true culture hero.

—Monroe K. Spears, "William James as Culture Hero," p. 32.

The links between art-making and dreaming are obviously very strong. But the connections we have made have been vague and analogical, beginning with the notion that in the dream state the mind somehow divides itself into a playwright-audience-participant arrangement whereby the dreamer writes the play, produces it, stars in it, and sees it on a holographic screen in the head, all at the same time—an impressive trick by waking standards. Among other things, Evans' theory might help us to temper the extravagance of this metaphor. . . . Specifically, Evans reverses one of Freud's major assumptions.

—Bert O. States, "I Think, Therefore I Dream," p. 54.

Representations of women as revolutionaries go back at least to Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, and, in verse, to Yeats's problems in coming to terms with Maude Gonne teaching "ignorant men most violent ways." As contemporary fiction attempts to follow or to sum up the history of the last two decades. . . . women increasingly appear at or near the center of extremist or terrorist politics, and they are no longer, as in Conrad, confined to the role of spiritualized . . . handmaidens of male revolution or protest. They . . . can be portrayed as determined theorists and activists, often as Lady Macbeths driving on their weak and wavering menfolk.

—George Kearns, "Revolutionary Women and Others," p. 121.

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